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## Charge of the Light Brigade

Who blundered?

Anne Boleyn:  
monster or  
martyr?



History's most  
dramatic year

Black Power  
Civil rights'  
evil twin?

The medieval  
longing for the  
good old days

The  
historians'  
view on  
**President  
Trump**

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CHRISTMAS 2016

# WELCOME

With the famous line, "Someone had blundered", Tennyson's poem **The Charge of the Light Brigade** helped immortalise the suicidal dash towards Russian guns in 1854. But the question remains: *who* had blundered? In this month's cover feature, Saul David revisits this iconic moment in the Crimean War and says who he thinks was to blame. You'll find this on page 22.

Historians have debated the Charge of the Light Brigade for more than 150 years. But **Donald Trump's election** as US president in November may well prove an even more enduring source of fascination. As soon as the result was announced, we assembled a panel of experts to consider how his shock (to some, at least) victory fits into broader historical trends. Turn to page 12 for their views.

Trump's victory has occurred during a year where surprising events seem to be occurring at an unusual rate. From Brexit to the coup attempt in Turkey, it's been a time of great upheaval. This is not, of course, the first 12 months to witness momentous happenings and so, on page 31, we asked a group of historians to nominate their "most dramatic year in history".

On a more predictable note, Christmas is soon to be upon us and so inside this issue you will find our annual **books of the year** feature (page 67) as well as our **fun festive quiz** (page 94). I hope you all have a very enjoyable break and look forward to continuing the historical conversation in 2017.

## Rob Attar

Editor

BSME Editor of the Year 2015, Special Interest Brand



## THIS ISSUE'S CONTRIBUTORS



### Saul David

The beauty of history is that it constantly throws up surprises. I thought I knew who was responsible for the disastrous Charge of the Light Brigade until I rewalked the ground and new documents came to light.

● *Saul considers who was to blame for the Charge of the Light Brigade on page 22*



### Hannah Skoda

The literature, sermons, political petitions and even letters of the 14th century are peppered with longing for 'the good old days'. I'm interested in what this tells us about contemporary responses to cataclysmic change in the period.

● *Hannah explores the surge of nostalgia in the 14th century on page 38*



### Peter Ling

When I began teaching the civil rights movement 30 years ago, the standard interpretation of Black Power was negative as we accepted its bad press as fact. Now, we realise that Black Power had its achievements and that it still matters.

● *Peter charts the rise of Black Power on page 43*

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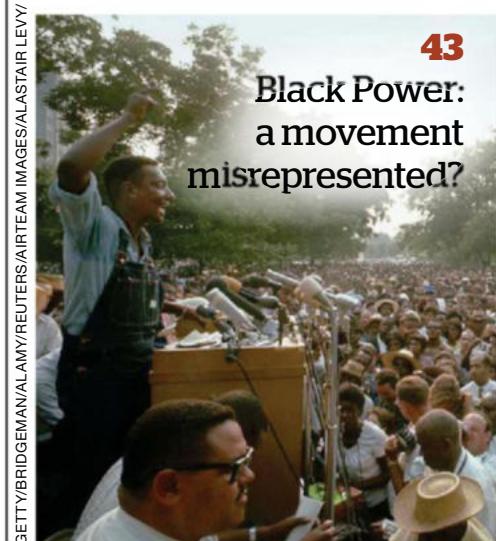
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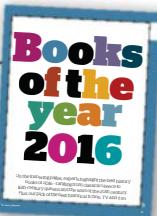
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**“HELL HAD OPENED  
UPON US FROM FRONT  
AND EITHER FLANK”**

**Dominic Sandbrook** highlights events that took place at **Christmas** in history

# ANNIVERSARIES

**25 December 1223**

## The Christmas nativity is born

*St Francis of Assisi recreates the birth of Christ, in Italy*

**T**oday the town of Greccio, in the Apennines in central Italy, is a sleepy sort of place. But at Christmas 1223, it welcomed one of the best-known men in the medieval world: Francis of Assisi, Catholic friar and founder of the Franciscan order. And it was Francis who decided that Greccio should put on the world's first nativity scene.

Then in his early forties, Francis was keen to remind the people of Greccio that there was more to Christmas than fancy food and fine gifts. Then, as now, people often lamented that the true meaning of the festival had been lost. So, determined to "commemorate the nativity of the Infant Jesus with great devotion [and] all possible solemnity", and adamant that there must be no hint of "lightness or novelty", Francis asked Pope Honorius III for permission to put on a little show for the people of Greccio.

Francis had been to the Holy Land a few years earlier, and may well have been inspired by the sites associated with the Gospels. According to St Bonaventure, he "prepared a manger, and brought hay, and an ox and an ass to the place appointed". Then, as midnight approached on Christmas Eve, "the brethren were summoned, the people ran together, the forest resounded with their voices, and that venerable night was made glorious by many and brilliant lights and sonorous psalms of praise".

The nativity scene was a huge hit. One man, a former soldier who had become one of Francis's closest companions, even claimed to have seen a vision of "an Infant marvellously beautiful, sleeping in the manger". From then on, there was no looking back.



An awestruck crowd looks on as St Francis of Assisi prepares the first Christmas nativity in this 13th-century Italian fresco

**Dominic Sandbrook** is a historian and presenter. His series about Britain in the 1980s was shown recently on BBC Two



24 December 1865

## The Ku Klux Klan is founded

*Six bored Tennessee men form a club that would become infamous for racial hatred*

**A**s Christmas 1865 approached, the town of Pulaski, Tennessee was not a happy place. Bitterly divided between supporters and opponents of slavery, Tennessee had nevertheless sided with the Confederate South in the American Civil War. Pulaski itself, on a major crossroads near the border with Alabama, was a slave-holding town, surrounded by "splendid plantations". And since newly liberated slaves made up perhaps half of its population, the mood among the town's white citizens was a toxic mixture of anger and fear. Even as Christmas approached, there were reports that it had become a magnet for 'roughs' from the local counties.

Among the men gathering in Pulaski that winter were six former soldiers in their mid-twenties, all of whom had fought bravely for the Confederacy. These young men were far from mindless thugs; one later became a state legislator, another edited the local newspaper and the others went on to become lawyers. But not only were they downhearted by the South's defeat, they were bored. There were no jobs and no opportunities. As one, John Lester, put it: "There was nothing to relieve" the emptiness that "followed the excitement of army scenes and service."

It was Lester who first suggested that to give themselves something to do, they should "start a club of some kind". The exact date is probably unknown, but legend has it that the first meeting was held on Christmas Eve 1865. The six men

devised an elaborate costume – a long white gown, decorated with occult symbols – as well as an intricate, pseudo-mystical hierarchy. At first, though, their club had no overt political purpose. Their aim, one said later, was "purely social and for our amusement"; the point was to "have fun, make mischief and play pranks on the public". The name of their new club was the Ku Klux Klan. ■

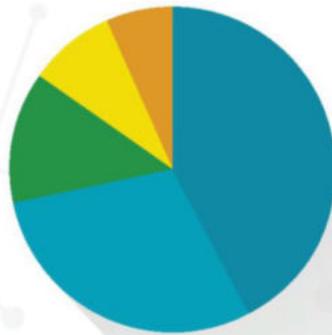


**Two robed members of the Ku Klux Klan, c1866-71. The club was born in an atmosphere of anger and fear in the wake of the American Civil War**



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## EYE OPENER

### THE COLOUR OF WAR

Men from a US Engineer Special Brigade help a fellow soldier ashore on Omaha beach, on D-Day, June 1944. This arresting image is just one of hundreds that are being digitally recoloured by Brazilian artist Marina Amaral.

The process of recolouring can take Amaral hours – even days – to achieve, with painstaking research into the history and colours behind the original photograph. You can see more of Amaral's work at [marinamaral.com](http://marinamaral.com)

## EXPERT COMMENT

# "The image of Shakespeare working in isolation has not been plausible for decades"



Oxford University Press has credited playwright Christopher Marlowe as the co-author of three of Shakespeare's plays. **Dr Paul Edmondson** shares his thoughts on the decision

### Marlowe is to join Shakespeare on the title pages of *Henry VI, Parts One, Two and Three* in *The New Oxford Shakespeare*. How common were writing collaborations?

Collaboration takes many different forms – writing one act, adding a scene, or part of one to an already completed work – and was standard practice for playwrights of Shakespeare's time. Thomas Middleton, Thomas Nashe, John Webster and many others co-wrote drama; Thomas Heywood claimed to have had "a main finger" in 220 plays.

Shakespeare collaborated as a jobbing playwright at the beginning of his career, but from 1594 became a founding shareholder and the leading dramatist for a highly successful theatre company. Most of his plays after 1594 are single authored but he collaborated again towards the end of his career.

### Doubts over the authorship of Shakespeare's works aren't new. What's different this time?

Understanding Shakespeare as an occasional collaborative writer has nothing to do with doubts that he was ever an author in the first place. In fact, knowing he worked with other people rather demolishes any kind of conspiracy theory. Shakespeare has been understood to have been a collaborative writer at least since 1634 when *The Two Noble Kinsmen* – co-authored with John Fletcher – was published posthumously with both their names on the title-page.

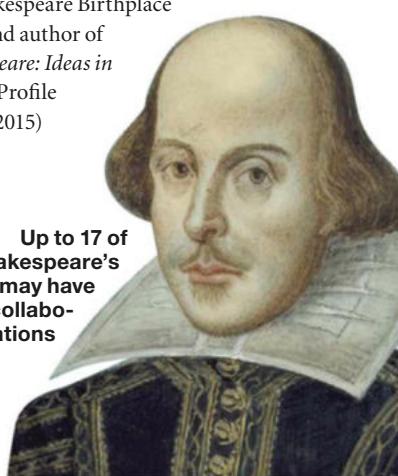
Marlowe's naming as a collaborator invites biographical considerations about how the two men inspired and competed with each other. *The New Oxford Shakespeare* suggests that 17 of Shakespeare's plays show some signs of collaboration and that Shakespeare himself was a collaborator in lesser-known plays – for example, *Arden of Faversham*.

### What impact will this have for future scholars of Shakespeare?

The image of Shakespeare working only in isolation has not been plausible for decades. What and how he wrote remain significant questions which require complex answers. Collaboration forces us to think about his professional career as a dramatist and does nothing to detract from his genius. ■

Paul Edmondson is head of research at the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust and author of *Shakespeare: Ideas in Profile* (Profile Books, 2015)

Up to 17 of Shakespeare's plays may have been collaborations



## A good month for...

### VIKING ROMANCE

New research suggests that the Viking invasion of Lindisfarne (pictured above) in AD 793 was launched by men hoping to prove their masculinity. Raiding, it is claimed, was an easy way to get rich and secure a wife in what was an increasingly polygamous society at home.

### SHIPWRECK STUDIES

Some 41 shipwrecks have been discovered in the Black Sea. Many of the wrecks, the earliest of which date to the ninth century, are so well preserved that chisel and tool marks are still visible on wooden planks.

## A bad month for...

### WETLAND ARCHAEOLOGY

Changing conditions in wetland sites such as Star Carr in Yorkshire is causing serious degradation in ancient organic material, including bone and wood.

### ROMAN STATUES

The first to second-century *Townley Venus* (pictured below), on show at the British Museum, required urgent restoration work after its thumb was knocked off during a corporate event.



GETTY

# 11

The lost graves of 11 Indonesian Muslim merchant seamen who died during the Second World War have been unearthed in a Liverpool cemetery

## NEW RESEARCH

### Ghosts of the past

Historians are examining the impact of supernatural beliefs on our ancestors

**W**hy did medieval people attempt to influence the cosmos through magic? What role did emotion play in the outcome of 17th-century witch trials and the use of protective symbols and objects in the home? These are questions being posed by historians as part of a three-year project, funded by the Leverhulme Trust, investigating what people's interactions with the supernatural between 1300 and 1900 can tell us about their states of mind.

"We're interested in how ordinary people felt about the potent yet unseen environmental forces by which they were surrounded, and how emotions, in any era, affect what we believe to be the truth," says Professor Malcolm Gaskill, leader of the research team, which is made up of historians from the University of East Anglia, University College London and the University of Hertfordshire. "We've already uncovered new ways of understanding the role of emotions in explaining the outcome of witchcraft trials."

Find out more at [innerlivesblog.com](http://innerlivesblog.com)



Melusine, the spirit of fresh water, depicted in the 15th century

### HISTORY IN THE NEWS

A selection of stories hitting the history headlines



#### Van Gogh sliced ear in a jealous rage

Art historian Martin Bailey has claimed that Vincent van Gogh cut off his own ear in 1888 after learning of his brother Theo's engagement, and not as the result of an argument with the artist Paul Gauguin.



#### Illuminated manuscript reveals its real purpose

Newly discovered marks on the 800-year-old Aberdeen Bestiary illuminated manuscript suggest it was created as a learning tool rather than for a high status client, as was previously thought.

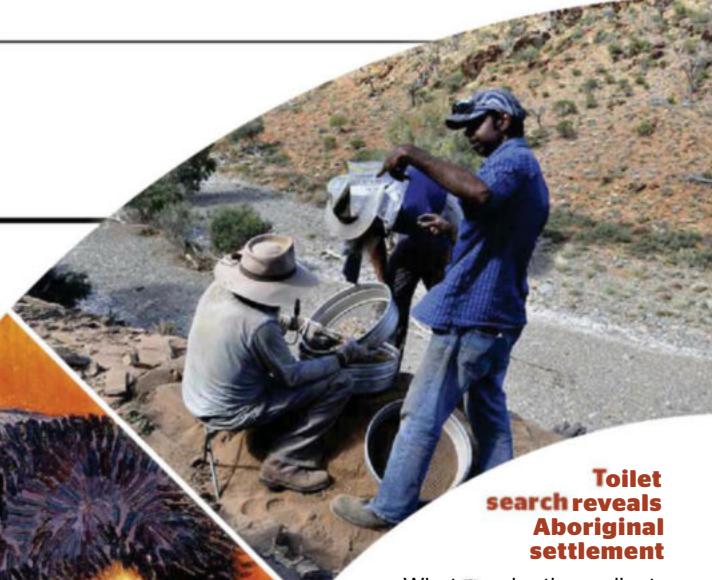
Raoul Wallenberg, who helped thousands of Jews flee Hungary in the Second World War, has been declared dead by Sweden, 71 years after he disappeared.



FROM TOP TO BOTTOM:  
Experts examine finds at the Warratyi rock shelter; A self-portrait of Vincent van Gogh in 1889 with a bandaged ear; A section from the 12th-century Aberdeen Bestiary shows Adam naming the animals; Raoul Wallenberg saved tens of thousands of Hungarian Jews

#### Toilet search reveals Aboriginal settlement

What may be the earliest-known Aboriginal settlement in Australia has been found by a man looking for somewhere to go to the toilet. The site, which could be 49,000 years old, contains evidence of human interaction and rock art.



The historians' view...

# Why did America elect Donald Trump?

On 8 November, the billionaire businessman surged to a sensational victory in the US presidential election. We asked four historians to offer their opinions on the causes of Trump's triumph, and what his presidency will mean for America

COMPILED BY **ROB ATTAR**

## **Is this the most surprising election result in American political history?**

**Adam Smith:** It shouldn't be. After eight years of a Democratic president, with the economy still recovering from a serious recession, the narrow victory of a Republican was always a likely outcome. US politics is cyclical; outside of the exceptional circumstances of the Civil War or the Great Depression, the parties tend to alternate in ascendancy every 8 to 12 years. The surprise was only because the pundits were so utterly convinced that Trump would lose. The polls always showed a tighter race than the media consensus would indicate, and there was plenty of instability evident in the electorate.

Trump's die-hard supporters who I talked to on election day claimed to be certain of their man's success, so it wouldn't have been a surprise to them. But undoubtedly, in terms of the swerve in the media narrative, this ranks at least with the 1948 election, the one that produced the now famous *Chicago Daily Tribune* headline: "Dewey Defeats Truman."

**Susan-Mary Grant:** The answer to this depends largely on who you ask. Certainly the media-intellectual complex, if one can call it that, appears not just surprised but aghast. From an outside perspective,

however, Trump's election does not seem all that surprising given the political, economic and social landscape of the United States in 2016. That it has brought to power an apparent establishment outsider does not of itself make it surprising.

One could cite many instances where a 'dark horse' candidate emerged from the confusion of his times. But perhaps the most obvious example would be the election in 1960 of John F Kennedy, America's first Catholic president, who ran against a candidate – Richard Nixon – who seemed the better qualified. Not only was it the closest election since 1916 (when Woodrow Wilson defeated Charles Evans Hughes), but, as in 2016, a variety of personal, media, economic and generational factors determined the outcome.

**Richard Carwardine:** Not as surprising as the sweeping local and state victories of the secret 'Know Nothing party' – anti-immigrant and anti-Catholic – in the 1854 Massachusetts state elections, when they swept the legislature and governorship. But it certainly makes a claim, even stronger than Harry S Truman's knockout of Thomas E Dewey in 1948, as the most surprising *presidential* outcome of all. It's a story of how a complete outsider, with no government or

military experience, took over a mainstream political party and deployed it against the very establishment of which it was part. This is the most successful populist uprising in US history: never before has a populist movement captured the presidency, though Andrew Jackson "flattered popular passions" in seeking the office in 1824 and in reaching it four years later.

## **To what extent have long-term social and economic trends played a part in the Trump phenomenon and now his victory?**

**Sylvia Ellis:** Combined with demographic change, there are two trends that appear to have impacted upon voting patterns in the US. Trump's populist approach appealed to those experiencing economic insecurity in the post-industrial world of globalisation. And social changes – the rise of younger and better-educated cohorts with post-materialist and self-expression values – have led to greater social tolerance of different cultures and lifestyles and a growing emphasis on such issues as racial and gender equality and environmentalism.

In turn, a cultural backlash from those feeling increasingly marginalised by what they term 'political correctness' led Trump to find an accepting audience of his blunt

## THE PANEL



Donald Trump prepares to take the stage in Greenville, South Carolina, May 2015. No president has "been so open in their disdain for constitutional norms", says Adam Smith



A triumphant Harry Truman displays the early edition of the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, which (wrongly) declared that Thomas E Dewey had defeated him in the 1948 presidential election



### Richard Carwardine

is professor of history at the University of Oxford. His books include *Lincoln: Profiles In Power* (Routledge, 2003)



### Sylvia Ellis

is professor of international history at Northumbria University, specialising in Anglo-American relations. She is the author of *Freedom's Pragmatist: Lyndon Johnson and Civil Rights* (Florida University Press, 2013)



### Susan-Mary Grant

is professor of American history at Newcastle University and the author of *A Concise History of the United States of America* (CUP, 2012)



### Adam Smith

is a senior lecturer at University College London, specialising in American history. He also presents history series on BBC Radio 4

and simplistic analysis of how to make American 'great' again.

**SMG:** America is a nation where the gap between the dream and the reality has always proved a potent political weapon. Purely in economic terms, Trump has presented himself, and has been widely perceived, as the epitome of the American dream of hard work and economic achievement; the ultimate businessman whose success is literally inscribed on the landscape in New York in the form of Trump Tower, and whose media presence has reinforced his exposure. The 'Trump Brand' is powerfully aspirational for those who feel on the margins of American society, who feel disenfranchised from economic and social opportunity in the post-industrial world that most of the developed nations now inhabit.

**RC:** Trump won by exploiting the deep wells of political anger and alienation among those economically hit by globalisation and, above all, automation. The loss of jobs in the Rust Belt of the Midwest over the past two decades; the stagnation of wages; the ever-widening chasm between working-men's pay and the rewards of corporate chiefs: these have played their part. In blaming their ills on Latino immigrants – illegal or not – and in believing that feminist and African American voices had succeeded over many years in grabbing political attention at their expense, some blue-collar white males effectively invited the overtures of an outsider who championed their cause.

**How much did longstanding questions of racial and gender equality have an impact on the election?**

**“** Trump won by exploiting the political anger and alienation among those economically hit by globalisation and, above all, automation

**RICHARD CARWARDINE**

**AS:** The country's first black president is to be succeeded by a president endorsed by the Ku Klux Klan: of course race matters. Trump's movement is a reaction against the dominant social and economic trends of the last few decades – trends that have seen America become more racially diverse and more liberal in its culture and social values. If there is one thing that Trump seems to personify, it is a protest against 'political correctness' – and the liberal outrage at Trump's misogyny, bullying, proud ignorance and implied racism simply reinforced his credentials as an iconoclast to his hard-core supporters. He's "going to shake the place up", a Trump supporter told me in Manhattan on Tuesday night.

So did gender matter? Of course it did. Another Trump fan – drunk at 4am in Midtown – joked (at least I think he was joking) that now it would be legal to "grab pussy again". The ultimate anti-political-correctness triumph was driven by intense, and, to the outsider, baffling hatred of Hillary Clinton. Polls show that 80 per cent of Americans are willing – in the abstract – to elect a female president, yet this campaign showed that women are still subjected to different standards than men.

**Political dynasties such as the Bushes and Kennedys have had great success over past decades. Is Hillary Clinton's defeat a reaction against dynastic rule?**

**SMG:** I should say not. Although American politics sometimes deploys the dynastic idea, the United States has never been ruled by a dynasty as such. It may reflect an uneasiness with the apparent assumption – and this is very much a recent phenomenon – that a president's wife could or should step out from the 'First Lady' role and seek power in her own right. Women in political power is, of course, historically hardly a new idea, but it is one that the United States seems to struggle with more than many other nations.

And despite Hillary Clinton's proven experience as secretary of state, it may be that some voters had her firmly imprisoned in the 'First Lady' box and saw her candidacy as hubristic and opportunist in that context.

**Why do you think American politics has become so polarised?**

**SE:** Ideologically the US appears to be more and more divided. But how far the American

**“** Women in political power is hardly a new idea, but it is one that the United States seems to struggle with more than many other nations

**SUSAN-MARY GRANT**

public has adopted extreme positions is still unclear with the majority of analysts feeling that most Americans are politically moderate but identifying more clearly with a particular party so that there are fewer numbers of floating voters. And those parties are less diverse in terms of their composition. There are few liberal Republicans or conservative Democrats anymore, for instance.

The reasons behind this shift are multiple and difficult to ascertain but certainly voters' views go beyond mere politics as research suggests lifestyle choices differ greatly between those voting for the two main parties. The timing of the changes in party allegiance – from the 1970s onwards – implies that race and religion play a large part in the shift, but also that the role of the media (24-hour news led by Fox and MSNBC, talk shows, social media campaigns), gerrymandering in Congress, and extremism in leadership are all possible factors in the polarisation.

**AS:** It's partly because the institutions that enabled shared conversations have frayed or been destroyed. In particular, people live in their own self-curated and self-reinforcing media bubbles. They receive information that validates their world-view and that makes them feel good. They are no longer so likely to be in social settings – such as public schools, the army, big industrial employers – that bring together different kinds of people.

It's also because racial and cultural issues have been for many years now the primary signifiers of partisanship rather than, for example, economics or foreign policy. 'Values' cannot so easily be compromised,

unlike the level of a tariff, tax or public subsidy. So 'values' voters – and that includes liberals voting for abortion rights and gay marriage just as much as conservatives voting against those things – naturally see themselves as a tribe defined in opposition to another tribe. There's much more to be said, but that's the short version.

**SMG:** I don't think, from a historical perspective, that American politics has become unusually polarised in 2016. Here it is important to look at the numbers, because Trump's victory was not ushered in by a 'silent majority' of the economically disenfranchised, however much the rhetoric surrounding it suggests was the case. If you want to look for polarised politics, go back 150 years to the election of 1860. There was polarisation, and it resulted in a civil war that cost more than 600,000 American lives and as many long-term wounded. The United States is not at that point (although it is worth adding that, sadly, some of the racial issues that pertained in 1860 continue to play out today).

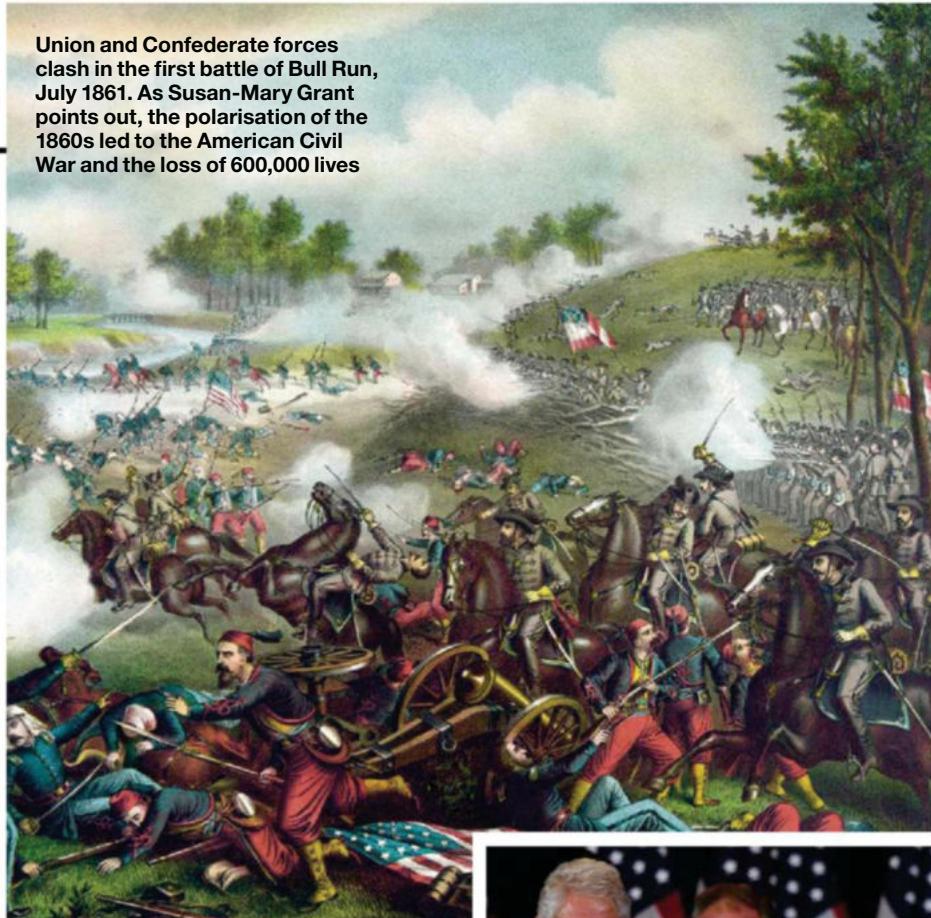
#### Have there been similarly divisive presidential elections in the past?

**RC:** Very few have generated such bitterness and poison. The election of 1800 was a bruising contest, with Adams Federalists and Jeffersonian Republicans each convinced that their opponents' victory would imperil the young nation and its historic mission. The four-way party contest of 1860 had a profoundly divisive *outcome*: Lincoln's election on an anti-slavery platform prompting the exit from the Union of the slave states of the lower South. That campaign was marked by name-calling, pitting 'Black' Republicans against 'Slave Power' Democrats, but since the convention of the day was for candidates to sit silently at home while others led the charge, there was little trading of personal insults among the presidential hopefuls themselves.

**SMG:** Apart from the very obvious divisions of 1860, you could cite the election of 1824, the only one to be decided by the House of Representatives because none of the candidates achieved a majority of the electoral vote.

The widely disputed election of 1876 that resulted in the 'Compromise of 1877' is

**Union and Confederate forces clash in the first battle of Bull Run, July 1861. As Susan-Mary Grant points out, the polarisation of the 1860s led to the American Civil War and the loss of 600,000 lives**



another example. This was possibly one of the most divisive elections in United States history. Fought between Rutherford B Hayes and Samuel J Tilden, it was decided by what was widely perceived to be the illegal awarding of Electoral College votes to Hayes. And, of course, the 2000 election that saw George W Bush triumph over Al Gore – after the supreme court stepped in to resolve the dispute over Florida's electoral votes – was undoubtedly divisive.

**SE:** Yes there have. 1896 and 1968 spring to mind. The first dominated by the currency question and the second by race and the war in Vietnam. George Wallace's third party challenge in 1968 was another populist appeal and was again a backlash against the racial change of the decade, including the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Voting Rights Act. That election period witnessed assassinations (Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy), demonstrations against the war, and clashes between protesters and police at the Democratic Convention in Chicago.

**On a similar note, are there any previous presidents or presidential candidates who resemble Trump?**



**Hillary Clinton, flanked by her husband, Bill, makes her concession speech following her shock defeat at the ballot box, 9 November**



**Women protest against the Vietnam War. The 1968 election brought tensions over the conflict to a head**

**AS:** There's been no president quite like Trump; none who have been so open in their disdain for constitutional norms, nor so lacking in either political or military experience, nor so at odds with their own party. Reagan was mocked for his ignorance but he was a two-term governor of a huge state and had an impressive roster of advisors and the support of think tanks. Trump has none of that.

The president that he most resembles is Andrew Jackson, an Indian-killer and victor of the battle of New Orleans against the British, who won election in 1828 on a tide of anti-elitism. Jackson's supporters lauded his alpha-male characteristics while the establishment at the time was aghast at his untutored disdain for protocol.

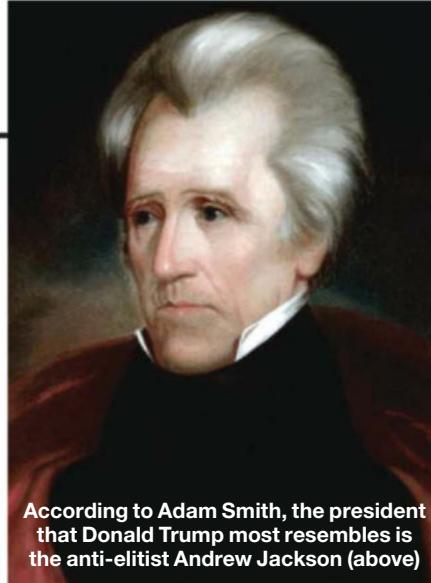
**SE:** Not really. There have been numerous populist candidates before – William Jennings Bryan in 1896; Theodore Roosevelt in 1912; George Wallace in 1968; Ross Perot in 1992 and 1996 – but none of them resemble Trump closely. Perot was another billionaire businessman to stand but he ran as an independent and did not benefit from the party apparatus as Trump has. Trump's willingness to say exactly what he thinks – without any apparent restraint by his party or team – is unique.

## To what extent is this a watershed moment for the Republicans and Democrats?

**RC:** The result poses a massive challenge for Democrats, who have lost much of their 'natural' constituency of white blue-collar voters. It was said that Trump couldn't win because of his over-dependence on this constituency, but – now that he's made

**“**In time, Clinton will be seen as a feminist icon. She may not have broken through the glass ceiling but she has put one hell of a crack in it

**SYLVIA ELLIS**



According to Adam Smith, the president that Donald Trump most resembles is the anti-elitist Andrew Jackson (above)

those inroads – the Democrats have much to do to win back voters whose fears and anger they have failed to address over the last 20 years.

Republicans will face the question: are we Trumpers? Many, probably most, of the Washington party establishment are not. How this plays out as Trump shapes his administration is beyond confident prediction, but we can be sure that the strains will show.

**AS:** This was not a realigning election. The groups who for the past 30 years have voted Republican continued to do so. There is no evidence that Trump brought more people into the party. He polled about the same number of votes as Mitt Romney in 2012, as well as fewer votes than Hillary Clinton. What he did manage to do, though, was to mobilise Republican voters more effectively than Clinton managed to mobilise Democratic voters in enough states to tip the balance his way in the Electoral College in a low-turnout election. In that important sense this was not a watershed election. However, it has given the Republicans more power than they've had since the 1920s.

This is the first time since Hoover's victory in 1928 that a Republican president has come into power with a clear Republican majority in both houses of Congress. He will now be able to shape the supreme court in a conservative political direction for a generation. And Republicans control two thirds of state governments. It is possible, then, that this is a tipping point election – one in which the ascendant party has an opportunity to re-shape the political landscape. But it may also turn out to be a Pyrrhic victory, especially given the

**“**It is possible that this is a tipping point election – one in which the ascendant party has an opportunity to re-shape the political landscape

**ADAM SMITH**

narrowness of the party's win, and the long-term relative decline of the party's core supporters – white people – as a proportion of the electorate.

## How do you think historians of the future will look back on this moment?

**SE:** It is too soon to tell in many ways. Once all the voting data has been digested and the Trump presidency has begun, they will at the very least identify this election as one of, if not *the*, most divisive in American history. It will also be the election that saw Americans choose their oldest and richest of all the presidents and one who, despite his vast wealth and long history of engaging with the political establishment he professed to despise, was able to portray himself as anti-establishment.

The role of social media and mass media will also be seen as important. But, in time, Clinton will also be seen as a feminist icon. She may not have broken through the glass ceiling but she has put one hell of a crack in it by winning the popular vote. Electoral change may also be on the cards.

**RC:** It would be folly to make predictions at this stage, when we don't know how far Trump will live up to his promises. Will there be trade tariffs, the dismantling of Obamacare, the fracturing of Nato, the mass deportation of illegal immigrants? It is certain that future historians will see the election as aggravating a profound cultural divide. But some will surely point to the qualified endorsement of Trump and what he was thought to stand for. Some wise commentators are noting that it is important not to inflate Trump's triumph: this was not a Reagan-style sweep. **II**

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Your views on the magazine and the world of history

# LETTERS

## Chain of thought

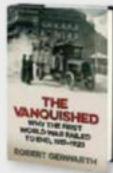
LETTER  
OF THE  
MONTH

I write further to the discussion in December's *Letters* about the photo in October's *Anniversaries*, purporting to show the Karl Drais pedal-less bike. In 1817 Karl Drais *did* invent a pedal-less bicycle, known in Germany as a Draisine, and in England as a hobby-horse.

The photo you printed actually shows a velocipede (nicknamed the boneshaker), invented in around 1867, probably by the Michaux brothers. By about 1870 the wooden wheels with iron tyres, as shown in your photo, were replaced by wire wheels with metal rims and solid rubber tyres. This development led directly – by increasing the diameter of the front wheel to push up the speed – to the high wheel bicycle, known later as the 'ordinary' and nicknamed the penny farthing. By 1885, with the introduction of the chain drive, the safety bicycle began to rule the roads. And with the development of the pneumatic tyre, by 1893 these vehicles had become recognisable as modern bicycles.

**Dave Piggott, Kent**

● We reward the letter of the month writer with one of our books of the year, *The Vanquished* by Robert Gerwarth. Read the commendation on page 69



Look, no pedals! An early 19th-century illustration shows a man riding a Draisine, known in England as a hobby-horse, a precursor of the bicycle

### Nazi invasion: a real threat...

Your article 'Why Hitler could have invaded Britain... if he'd chosen to' (*History Now*, November) about the mooted Operation Sea Lion reminded me of a lecture on Nazi foreign policy I attended while a student at Heidelberg University in 1983.

The lecturer said he had no time for people who doubted the reality of Operation Sea Lion because in 1940 he had been a terrified teenager sitting in a [German invasion] barge at the mouth of the Rhine, praying that the invasion would be cancelled!

**Tim Herbert, Birmingham**

### ...or a red herring?

I entirely agree with Anthony J Cumming's refutation of the idea that the planned German invasion of Britain early in the Second World War was a real threat (*Letters*, December). At that time no one seemed in the least concerned that a German

invasion was possible, even when the church bells rang to indicate that an invasion had started. (That tolling was of course a false alarm.)

It's also been suggested that a German attack could have been launched with paratroops. Had this been attempted, I can imagine the RAF having a field day destroying the lumbering Junkers Ju 52 troop-carrier planes. And if any attempt had been made to use gliders, the death toll would have been horrendous. The prerequisite to any attempt at invasion was dominance of the skies – something the Germans failed to achieve.

It has been said that, when the Germans called off their air attacks, the RAF was on the point of collapse. This doesn't seem to fit the facts. At the end of the Battle of Britain, Allied fighter production was higher than losses, the real problem being the shortage of skilled pilots. This problem was partially solved by recruiting pilots from the Commonwealth and

other European countries – in particular, Poland.

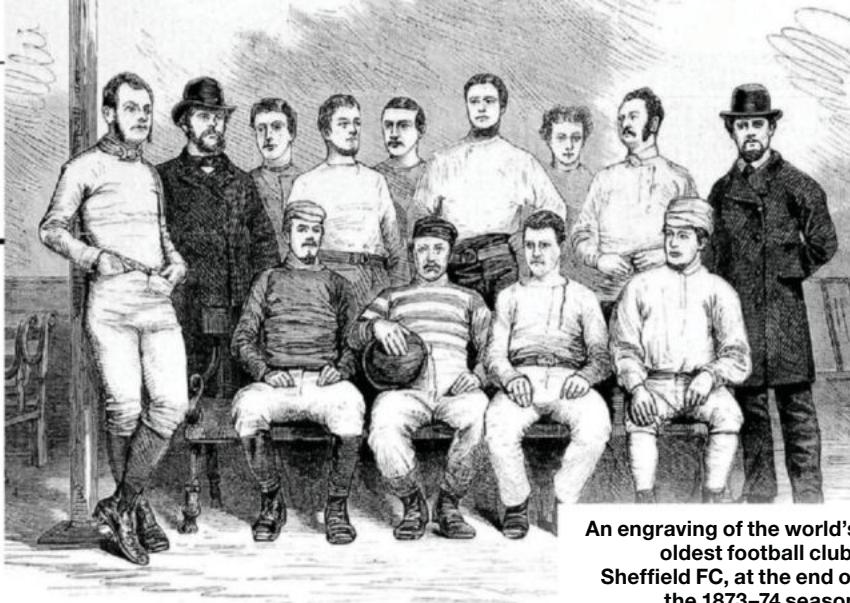
However, Britain still faced a serious threat – one that might have become reality if Hitler had been correct in his belief that the Soviet Union could be conquered in weeks. Had this happened, Germany would have had access to a huge quantity of raw materials, particularly oil.

**Derrick Holt, Oxford**

### True toll of the Harrying

Marc Morris's essay on the consequences of the Norman conquest (*What the Normans Did for Us*, November) was typically thought-provoking and challenging. However, he appears to have lost his sense of proportion in at least one respect. He asserts that the 100,000 people killed during the Harrying of the North represented "only a small fraction of the country's population of around 2 million". In fact, it wasn't just a small fraction, as he claims – it was around 5 per cent (and perhaps more than 10 per cent of the population in the north).





An engraving of the world's oldest football club, Sheffield FC, at the end of the 1873-74 season

The population of England is today around 53 million; if 5 per cent of that population was lost today, that would represent the killing of 2.6 million people (the entire population of Greater Manchester) – and I doubt that Morris would regard that as trifling. It must have been the same for the people of the north in 1069.

**Peter Booth**, Prunay-Cassereau, France

**Marc Morris replies:** Firstly, just to be clear, I don't regard the Harrying as 'trifling', nor did I use that word or anything like it. The word I used in the paragraph in question was "terrible".

Mr Booth thinks I have lost a "sense of proportion". The point, clearly made in my article, was that a 5 per cent drop in the overall population was *proportionally* small compared with the losses suffered by the Old English aristocracy, more than 90 per cent of whom were killed or displaced as a result of the Conquest.

Terrible as it was (to repeat the phrase I used in the article), a 5 per cent drop in the overall population would have had little impact on England's culture. The replacement of more than 90 per cent of the ruling class, by contrast, had profound and irreversible effects on the country's politics, law, language, architecture and attitudes.

### Pitch battle

Regarding Ellie Cawthorne's news story about the dispute over the origin of football (*History Now*, December), it is an indisputable fact that the modern game is based on the Sheffield FA rules written in the summer of 1857.

Sheffield FC was formed in October 1857, and the club is recognised by FIFA

MARY EVANS

as the oldest football club in the world. Hallam FC, also formed in Sheffield, is the second-oldest club, and plays matches on the oldest football pitch in the world. The derby between the two clubs is still played each year.

**Rex C Woolhouse**, Leicester

### Soul food

I read with great interest your recipe for soul cakes (*Samantha's Recipe Corner*, November). I've known and sung the following little chant since childhood:  
*A soul cake, a soul cake  
Please good missus, a soul cake  
One for Peter, two for Paul  
And three for him who made us all*

I'd be interested to know whether this ditty is common only in Nottinghamshire, where I was born and brought up, or if it is sung more widely.

**DP Gregson**, Knaresborough

### Correction

● A few readers have queried the caption for the image that accompanied the story about Bonnie Prince Charlie's retreat to Scotland in December's *Anniversaries*. We wrote that the picture showed Jacobites heading north after abandoning Derby in 1745; however, our correspondents believe that the image actually shows captured Jacobites after their defeat at Culloden in 1746.

### WRITE TO US

We welcome your letters, while reserving the right to edit them. We may publish your letters on our website. Please include a daytime phone number and, if emailing, a postal address (not for publication). Letters should be no longer than 250 words.

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## SOCIAL MEDIA

What you've been saying on Twitter and Facebook



**@HistoryExtra: What do you think is the most fascinating period in history and why?**

**Nicola Pritchett** The Victorian period for me! The golden age of invention and innovation; advancements in medicine, industry, transport... all life-changing, fantastic stuff

**@Niamh\_Lau** Wars of the Roses. Political intrigue, murder, war, shifting monarchy. So interesting and very complex

**Cheryl Prince** The Tudor period, especially the reign of Henry VIII. He effectively changed the course of history in breaking from the Catholic church. All for a woman

**Rob Reynolds** I've always found the Punic Wars fascinating: an epic clash of cultures lasting decades with brilliant characters like Hamilcar Barca, Hannibal and Scipio Africanus

**@rdmontescutie** Georgian England, hands down! The 1700s were such a powerhouse of innovation and change! Plus, the humor was top notch

**Sujitha Parshi** I find the Cold War era the most fascinating. It was supposed to be an ideological tension between not only two power blocs in terms of the politics and military, but also involving their citizens. But it was at the height of tensions between the two that the people of both blocs found common ground in opposing nuclear armament against the wishes of their governments

**@tommalkmus** First World War – shaped the general map of the world and ended numerous monarchies sending Europe into communism and fascism

**Laura Knappenberger** I'm fascinated by the so-called 'renaissance' of the 12th century. When scholars began to translate texts from Greek and Arabic sources, they provided a significant infusion of knowledge. Universities were established. Europe and the Far East made contact. So much change in such a relatively short time. It must have been mind-boggling!

**Lucy Driver** Georgian. It was a flash of colour, style extravagance, enlightenment, industry, and a little bit of debauchery in between two seemingly quite repressive/socially strict periods. Such an informative period. Just fascinating

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P1729J



Michael Wood on... **the value of imperial history**

## “The empire made us, whatever our background as Britons”

“

It's been quite a year of anniversaries, from the deaths of Æthelred the Unready (1016) and Shakespeare, 600 years later, and from the Norman conquest to the Somme.

History has seldom felt more current – on TV, on radio and in print – and this magazine has done its bit, too, as a generator of ideas and a refractor of the huge public interest in the stories that have helped shape us.

It seems to me that this only emphasises the value of history – how understanding the world around us is vital in an open society – as has been underlined this year by the momentous vote on Brexit and the US election.

History, as always, gives value and meaning to the present. Viewed properly, it is our reality check.

One anniversary this year – one that attracted less attention than it deserved – comes repeatedly to mind as the tragedy in the near east unfolds. The Sykes-Picot agreement of May 1916 divided the Ottoman Arab world into areas of British and French interest: “I should like to draw a line from the ‘e’ in Acre to the last ‘k’ in Kirkuk”, said British representative Mark Sykes. Even more than the 1947 Partition of India, or the imperial carve-up of Africa, it has left a bitter legacy. When Mosul fell in 2014, the so-called Islamic State or Daesh proclaimed the line erased – a view endorsed by many commentators. Though that now looks premature, it seems certain that the crisis will continue for some time. How the situation might develop is still unclear; readers may recall my column two years ago on the Peters map, in which I speculated about possible future configurations of the map of the near east.

All of which leads me back to the value of history, and the perspective it gives – especially the history of the British empire. I have written before about the need for better teaching of imperial history in schools. The empire made us, whatever our background as Britons: it is the common history that shaped us. Yet when I talk at schools and colleges, I am still surprised at how little it is studied.

Take India, for example. Some 1.3 million Indians served in the First World War, half of them in Iraq, and

74,000 were killed – a story told in Shrabani Basu's book *For King and Another Country*. In the Second World War, 2.5 million Indians served – the largest volunteer army in history – and 87,000 died. As Field Marshal Sir Claude Auchinleck said, Britain “couldn't have come through both wars if they hadn't had the Indian army”.

Little of this, though, is part of school history – a fundamental failure (some have even called it dishonesty) at the heart of the curriculum. History is not there only to entertain and teach critical judgment; it is also there to help us understand our world. And it is a powerful lens. Just as *King Lear* or *The Brothers Karamazov* reveal truths about the human condition, so too do great works of history. Read born storytellers such as Christopher Hibbert or William Dalrymple on the Indian rebellion of 1857, for example, and you feel the tragic power of a great novel – but it's all true.

You could hardly have a more thrilling yet contentious narrative than the story of the British empire. The history of India, the Caribbean, Iraq, Israel-Palestine, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, China since the Opium Wars – these are all world history, but they are also British history. *The Guardian* recently quoted Mukulika Banerjee, at the London School of Economics, as saying that British students arrive at her university completely ignorant about the empire, though it is such a vital part of their history. “When we talk of Syria today,” she said “they have no knowledge of Britain's role in the Middle East in the last century. When discussing burning political questions today, they have no historical context to draw on that links Britain's own past with those events. Similarly, they have no clue about the history of immigration... They haven't learned any of it at school.” All I can say is: they surely should.

So in this holiday season, may I wish readers more exciting adventures in British history in the next year: compelling, fascinating, always new, always challenging. And I hope that, along with tangerines and chocolates, your Christmas stocking contains some great historical writing to enjoy by the fireside. Season's greetings! ■

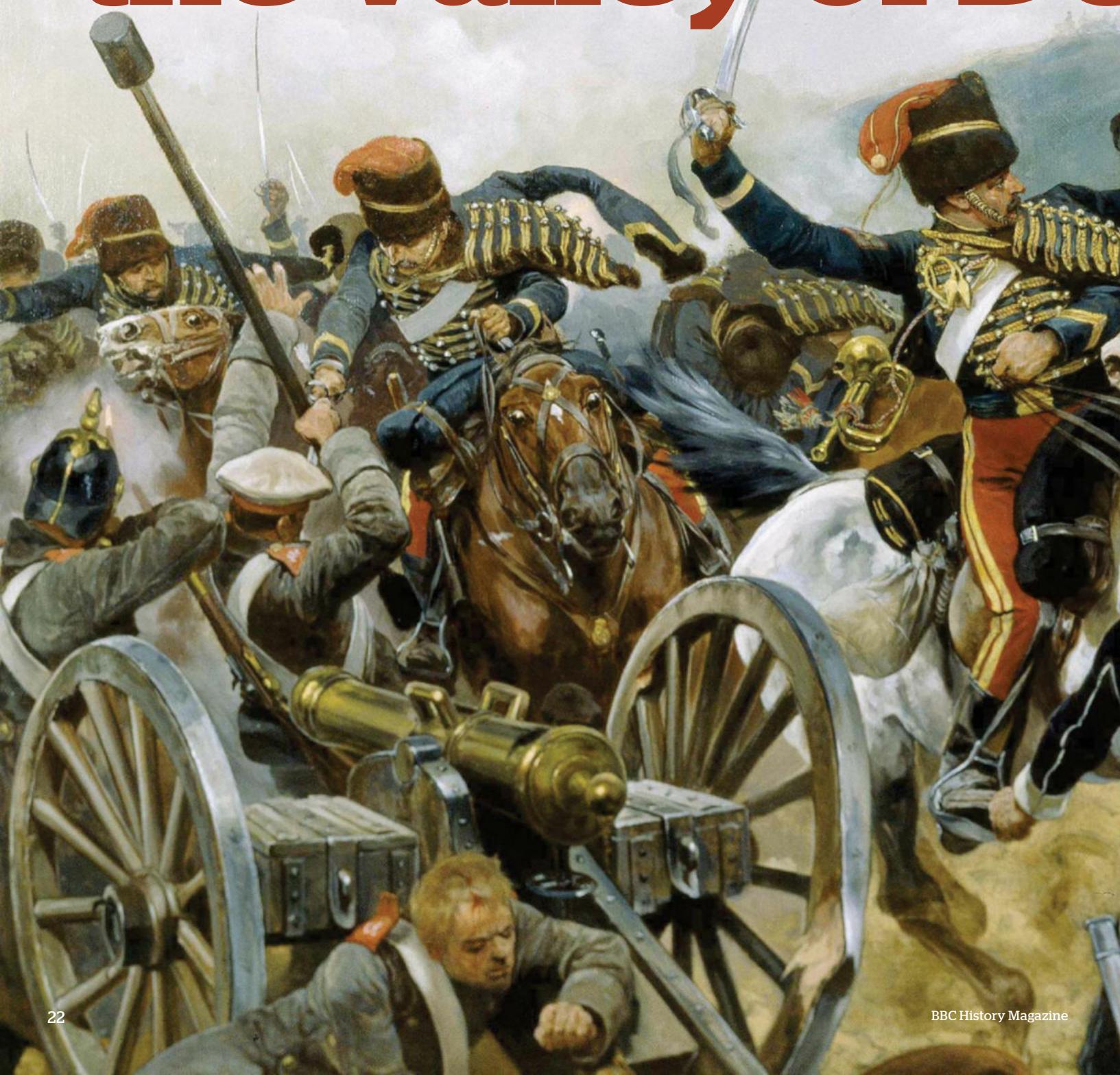
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COVER STORY

# Who blundered the Valley of De



# in death?

The Charge of the Light Brigade is one of the most notorious fiascos in British military history. But who should shoulder the blame for this suicidal assault on Russian guns? **Saul David** considers the evidence



The Light Brigade engages Russian gunners and cavalry during their infamous charge on 25 October 1854. When they returned to British lines, just 195 of around 676 horsemen were still mounted

**B**y Jove," shouted an eagle-eyed member of Lord Raglan's staff. "They're going to take away the guns!" It was 10.40am on 25 October 1854. Three hours earlier Lord Raglan, the British commander in the Crimea, had watched helplessly from his vantage point on the Sapouné Ridge as a huge force of Russian infantry overwhelmed three of the Turkish-held redoubts (earthwork forts) on the Causeway Heights, a low east-west range of hillocks that divided the plain below him into a north and south valley. The loss of these redoubts had left the British supply port of Balaklava, situated below the south valley, at the mercy of the Russians. But much to Raglan's relief, two subsequent attempts by Russian cavalry to take the port had been gloriously repulsed by a 'Thin Red Line' of Highlanders and an uphill charge by the Heavy Brigade of British horse.

At 10am, keen to follow up these successes, Raglan had ordered his cavalry "to advance and take any opportunity to recover the [Causeway] Heights", and to use the support of infantry who were en route. But Lord Lucan, the cavalry commander, chose not to move until the infantry arrived.

As Raglan fumed at Lucan's inactivity, a staff officer alerted him to activity in the redoubts. Peering through his naval telescope – specially modified so he could use it with his one remaining hand (he had lost his right arm at Waterloo) – Raglan could see the Russians bringing forward horses and lasso tackle to remove the British 12-pounder naval guns that had been sited in the earthworks. He assumed the Russians were about to withdraw and take the captured guns with them. His mentor the Duke of Wellington had never lost a gun, and Raglan was anxious to retain the same proud record. Turning to his senior staff officer, he dictated the following momentous order: "Lord Raglan wishes the cavalry to advance rapidly to the front – follow the enemy and try to prevent the enemy from carrying away the guns."

## Tempers fray

The pencil-written order was handed to Captain Louis Nolan, the finest horseman on the staff. It was an unfortunate choice: no officer had more contempt for the cavalry commanders, Lucan and his deputy Lord Cardigan, than the quick-tempered Nolan. He felt they were far too timid.

Within 15 minutes, Nolan had reached the valley floor and located Lucan on rising ground at the near end of the Causeway Heights. He handed over the order, which



**A bugle used by trumpeter-major Henry Joy of the 17th Lancers at the battle of Balaklava in 1854**

For about 30 yards further, the headless body kept **the saddle, the lance at the charge** firmly gripped under the right arm

Lucan read with alarm. Now he was being asked to recover the guns without infantry support. He complained to Nolan about the "uselessness" and "dangers" of such an operation.

"Lord Raglan's orders," retorted Nolan, "are that the cavalry should attack immediately."

If, as seems likely, Nolan used the word "attack" on his own authority, it was a fatal intervention. The order had made no mention of an attack. So did Lord Raglan perhaps have a different objective in mind?

"Attack, sir!" said Lucan. "Attack what? What guns, sir?"

Waving his hand vaguely eastwards in the direction of the redoubts, Nolan said contemptuously: "There, my lord, is your enemy! There are your guns!"

Lucan claimed later that from his position he could see "neither enemy nor guns", and that Nolan's gesture was towards "the further end of the [north] valley". There, clearly visible, was a Russian battery of eight cannon, the sun glinting off their polished barrels.

At this critical moment, according to one eyewitness, Lucan "appeared to be surprised and irritated at the impetuous and disrespectful attitude and tone of Captain Nolan". He "looked at him sternly but made no answer, and after some hesitation proceeded to give

orders to Lord Cardigan to charge the enemy with the Light Brigade".

If Lucan had only questioned Nolan further, he must surely have discovered that his objective was to recover the captured naval guns on the Causeway Heights, rather than seize the battery of Russian guns in the north valley. But so irritated was he by the taunting tone in Nolan's voice that he chose not to continue the conversation.

Stung into action, Lucan made his final plans: Cardigan's Light Brigade of Cavalry would lead the attack down the north valley, with the Heavy Brigade in support. The message was taken to Cardigan by Nolan who, when the Light Brigade commander voiced his objections, asked if he and his men were afraid. "By God!" responded a furious Cardigan. "If I come through this alive, I'll have you court-martialled for speaking to me in that manner."

Instead of returning to Raglan, Nolan rode over to his old friend Captain William Morris, commanding one of the Light Brigade's lead regiments, and got his permission to accompany the attack.

Cardigan, meanwhile, had sent one of his aide-de-camps to query Lucan's order. This caused Lucan to return in person. "Lord Cardigan," he said, "you will attack the Russians in the valley."

"Certainly, my lord," replied Cardigan, "but allow me to point out to you that there is a battery in front, a battery on each flank, and the ground is covered with Russian riflemen." In other words, the north valley was a death trap from which they were unlikely to escape.

"I cannot help that," responded Lucan. "It is Lord Raglan's positive order that the Light Brigade is to attack the enemy."

## Pierced heart

At 11.10am, stationed with his two staff officers at the head of the Light Brigade, Lord Cardigan turned to his trumpeter: "Sound the advance!"

As one, the men and horses of the Light Brigade of Cavalry – which numbered around 676 – moved forward at the walk. Leading the way were the 17th Lancers and 13th Light Dragoons, deployed side by side in two lines, followed 100 yards further back by the 11th Hussars, and with a similar gap to the 8th Hussars and the 4th Light Dragoons.

The brigade had just accelerated to a trot when Captain Nolan surged ahead of the first line, shouting and waving his sword. He may have realised that Cardigan was not going to wheel to the right to attack the redoubts, and was trying to correct the error; or he may simply have been urging the brigade on. We will never know. With just 50 yards separating him from Cardigan, a shell burst between



**Lord Lucan:** The cavalry commander gave the Light Brigade its fateful mission after misinterpreting Lord Raglan's order



**Lord Raglan:** The British commander in the Crimea's decision to send the Light Brigade into action was probably unnecessary



**Captain Louis Nolan:** The horseman's scornful manner contributed to the misunderstanding between Raglan and Lucan

them. Nolan gave a ghastly shriek and dropped his sword. A twitch of his bridle hand caused his horse to turn and gallop back through the advancing squadrons. He then fell to the ground. A fragment of shell had pierced his heart, killing him instantly.

Onward the brigade rode into that terrible crossfire. "Hell had opened upon us from front and either flank," recalled a private in the 17th, "and it kept upon us during the minutes – they seemed like hours – which passed while we traversed the mile and a quarter at the end of which was the enemy. The broken and fast-thinning ranks raised rugged peals of wild, fierce cheering that only swelled the louder as the shot and shell from

the battery tore gaps through us..."

The private continued: "Close in! Close in!" was the constant command of the squadron and troop officers... But the order was scarcely needed, for of their own instance and, as it seemed, mechanically, men and horses alike sought to regain touch."

A corporal of the 13th was "struck by a shot or shell full in the face, completely smashing it, his blood and brains spattering us who rode near". A sergeant of the 17th had his head taken off by roundshot, "yet for about 30 yards further the headless body kept the saddle, the lance at the charge firmly gripped under the right arm".

With the front rank just 80 yards from the

battery, the Russians fired a point-blank salvo of grapeshot that brought down men and horses in heaps. Five officers were among the dead, but Cardigan rode on unscathed. As he approached the bank of white smoke that masked the battery, he shouted: "Steady! Steady! Close in!"

Seconds later the front rank swept into and around the battery, sabring and spearing Russian gunners as they tried to tow the guns to safety. In the smoke and confusion, Cardigan became separated from his men and made his own way back to the British lines. The remnants of the brigade were rallied by the surviving officers and led in a desperate attack against a mass of

# WHY LUCAN'S EYES DECEIVED HIM

The communication breakdown between Lord Raglan and his cavalry commander is perhaps explained by the topography of the Balaklava battlefield, says Saul David

MAP ILLUSTRATION BY PAUL HEWITT

It is hard to comprehend how the Light Brigade could have been misdirected until you stand on the spots where the main actors were situated when they made their fatal decisions. The site on the edge of the Sapouné Ridge, from where Raglan and his staff are said to have observed the battle of Balaklava, is today marked by a viewing platform. When I visited it, I was struck by the panoramic view it afforded of the battlefield.

Directly below the platform is a large plain covered with vineyards and other crops – just as it was in 1854 – and bisected by a tarmac road that snakes from right to left. This is the famous Woronzow Road that, for much of its length, runs along the range of hills known to the British during the Crimean War as the Causeway Heights.

From Raglan's vantage point, the Heights appear to be little more than a slight rise in the ground and are dwarfed by the hills that fringe the plain to the north and east. Does this explain why Raglan felt justified in issuing those two orders to Lucan and the cavalry: first to advance and take any opportunity to "recover the Heights"; and then to "advance rapidly to the front – follow the enemy and try to prevent the enemy from carrying away the guns [from the Heights]"?



Lord Raglan's view of the Valley of Death from the Sapouné Ridge

He was not – as some commentators have suggested – ordering cavalry to attack fixed positions up a steep hillside; but instead wanted Lucan to move the cavalry forward on both sides of a relatively gentle slope, and possibly even along it, to hasten the Russian withdrawal and encourage them to abandon the British guns.

Just as revealing was my visit to the

approximate location where Lucan had received Raglan's orders, on a slight knoll of ground between the two valleys. From there Lucan's view of the captured redoubts would have been obscured by rising ground. So when Nolan gestured vaguely ("There, my lord, is your enemy! There are your guns!"), it is easy to understand why Lucan mistook the Russian battery for Raglan's true target.

## The Balaklava battlefield on 25 October 1854





Russian cavalry beyond the guns.

"It was the maddest thing that was ever done," noted a Russian officer. "They broke through our lines, took our artillery, and then, instead of capturing our guns and making off with them, they went for us... They dashed in amongst us, shouting, cheering and cursing. I never saw anything like it. They seemed perfectly irresistible, and our fellows were quite demoralised." Having driven the Russian cavalry back on the Chernaya river, at the top of the north valley, the survivors fought their way back to the British lines.

When the battered remnant of the Light Brigade formed up near the same ground they had charged from 25 minutes earlier, only 195 men were still mounted. Even with the return of stragglers, the losses were crippling: 107 men killed, 187 wounded and 50 missing (most of them captured). The number of dead horses was almost 400.

### A victory of sorts

Even after the fatal charge, Lord Raglan was keen to use his infantry to retake the captured redoubts. He was dissuaded by General Canrobert, his French counterpart, on the grounds that troops could not be spared from the siege lines for their garrisons. Thus the charge was the last action of the battle of Balaklava which, though far from conclusive, was a Russian victory of sorts – their first of a war that had begun the previous March when the Russian tsar refused British and French ultimatums to withdraw his troops from Ottoman territory. Determined to protect the Ottomans by neutralising Russian power in

**"They dashed in amongst us, shouting and cursing," noted a Russian officer. "They seemed perfectly irresistible"**

the Black Sea, the Allies had landed on the Crimean peninsula in early September 1854. Within a month they were besieging the great naval base of Sevastopol from the Chersonese Plateau to its south.

Though the Russian attack of 25 October had fallen short of its original objective – to capture the British-held port of Balaklava and sever the supply line to Raglan's troops on the plateau – it still had severe consequences for Raglan's army. By taking the Causeway Heights, the Russians denied the British the use of their main supply route from Balaklava to the plateau via the Woronzow Road. In fine weather this was not a problem as a shorter route known as the Col was just as good. But as winter set in, and the road up the Col disintegrated, it became impossible to get enough

supplies to the troops in the trenches.

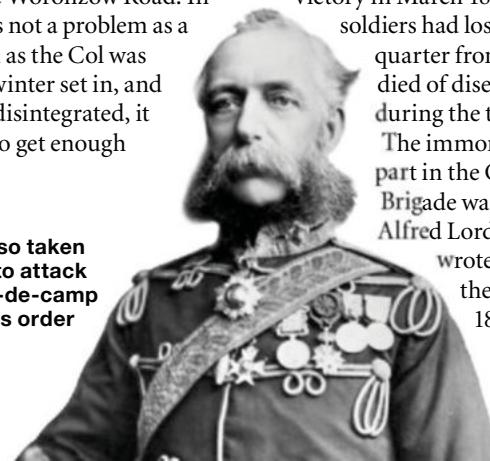
By the end of November, so overwhelmed was the Commissariat (the department in charge of resupply), and so poor the single road up to the plateau, that many of the goods that did reach Balaklava were left to rot on the quays. "The English," wrote a French officer, "will actually exchange their boots for something to eat... It's pitiful to see such superb men asking permission to gorge themselves on the dregs in our mess tins."

With no fuel, inadequate shelter and insufficient food, the British troops fell easy prey to disease, particularly cholera and typhus. "The noblest army England ever sent from these shores," wrote the editor of *The Times*, "has been sacrificed to the grossest mismanagement. Incompetence, lethargy, aristocratic hauteur, official indifference, favour, routine, perverseness, and stupidity reign, revel and riot in the camp before Sevastopol, in the harbour at Balaklava... and how much nearer to home we do not venture to say."

By the time the war ended – following the fall of Sevastopol – with a qualified Allied victory in March 1856, 21,000 British soldiers had lost their lives, only a

quarter from enemy action. Most died of disease and malnutrition during the terrible winter of 1854/55. The immortal status of all who took part in the Charge of the Light Brigade was guaranteed when Alfred Lord Tennyson, poet laureate, wrote his eponymous verse of the famous action in late 1854, three weeks after

**Lord Cardigan was so taken aback by the order to attack that he sent an aide-de-camp to Lucan to query his order**





**The 13th Regiment of the Light Dragoons after the battle of Balaklava. Those who lost their lives in the Valley of Death were victims of an order that should never have been given, argues Saul David**

## If Captain Nolan used the word “attack” when giving Lucas the order from Raglan, **he bears the chief responsibility for what followed**

reading a report of the battle in *The Times*. The second stanza begins:

*Forward, the Light Brigade!  
Was there a man dismayed?  
Not though the soldiers knew  
Some one had blundered”*

So who had blundered? Writing three days after the battle, Lord Raglan blamed Lucan. “From some misconception of the order to advance,” he wrote in his official dispatch, “[Lucan] considered that he was bound to attack at all hazards.”

Lucan was duly recalled to London where he tried – and failed – to clear his name. Did he deserve to shoulder the blame? Lord Cardigan, his former brother-in-law, was not in any doubt. “[Lucan] ought,” wrote Cardigan, “to have had the moral courage to disobey the order till further instructions were issued.”

In truth, all three principals – Raglan, Lucan and Nolan – bear some responsibility. Even if it had been interpreted accurately, Raglan’s final order to Lucan was probably unnecessary. After all, the naval guns had

been spiked and could not be fired, the infantry had nearly arrived, and even a “demonstration” by cavalry along the Causeway Heights would have incurred casualties. He should, moreover, have taken into account the fact that Lucan’s view of the battlefield was much more limited than his and made the final order more precise (by mentioning the ‘Heights’, for example).

Lucan should have insisted on clarification from Nolan. But he allowed his pride to get the better of him. As for Nolan, so contemptuous was he of Lucan’s ability, so desperate for the cavalry to show its worth, that he failed in the one essential duty of a staff galloper: to provide the officer in receipt of the message with the necessary clarification. If the written order was imprecise, then how much more was Nolan’s insolent gesture: “There, my lord, is your enemy! There are your guns!”

It seems, moreover, that he used the word ‘attack’ when Raglan had intended a mere show of force. If so, Nolan bears the chief responsibility for what followed. Such was the opinion of most cavalrymen, according to Lieutenant Frederick Maxse RN who was

serving on Raglan’s staff, and whose papers have only recently come to light. After the charge, Maxse inspected the ground and, “on looking to the left, saw poor Nolan lying dead who 10 minutes before I had seen eager & full of life, galloping down to Lord Lucan, anxious & determined to make him do something with the cavalry (of which he is a member, he was always very indignant at the little they had done in this campaign & bitter against Lord L). All the cavalry lay this disastrous charge on his shoulders & say that he left no option to Lord L to whom they say his tone was almost taunting on delivering the message – if he was to blame he has paid the penalty.”

Nigel Kingscote, another staff officer, agreed. If Nolan had lived, he told Raglan’s son, he “would no doubt have been broke by court martial”. ■

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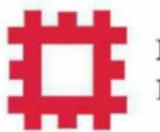
**Saul David** is a military historian and broadcaster. His books include *Operation Thunderbolt* (Hodder, 2015) and *Zulu* (Viking, 2004)

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"To Horse, Proletarian!" exhorts a poster from revolutionary Russia in 1918, the year in which the "modern age was dramatically ushered in"



As the year that brought us the Brexit vote, Donald Trump's election as US president and an escalating war in Syria approaches its conclusion, we asked six historians to offer their opinions on the past's most tumultuous moments

# What was history's most dramatic year?

# 30 BC

JOANN FLETCHER

**“**The most dramatic year was surely 30 BC, when the death of Cleopatra VII not only ended three millennia of dynastic history in Egypt but shaped the future of the western world.

Having clashed the previous year with their rival Octavian at the somewhat inconclusive sea battle of Actium off the Greek coast, Cleopatra and her husband Mark Antony were only defeated when their land forces defected and their Red Sea fleet was destroyed by Arab pirates. And Octavian was unable to capitalise on the advantage he had gained at Actium, since his troops had mutinied, demanding pay he did not have. Meanwhile Cleopatra still commanded an immense treasury.

By 30 BC, having stockpiled half of this wealth within her vault-like tomb in Alexandria, Cleopatra gave the rest to her son, Caesarion. As Octavian's forces closed in,

she sent Caesarion away to safety, but he and her key supporters were tracked down and executed, and the defection of their remaining troops left the couple little choice but to commit suicide.

Egypt was officially annexed by Rome on 31 August 30 BC, and the death of Octavian's greatest rivals left him as sole master of the Roman world; taking the title Augustus, he became its first emperor. Funded by the fabled wealth of Egypt, he was finally free to fashion a future that would shape the western world for centuries – from Rome's subsequent invasion of Britain to its eventual acceptance of Christianity, all made possible by the dramatic events of 30 BC.

Joann Fletcher's latest book is *The Story of Egypt* (Hodder & Stoughton, 2015)

A depiction of Cleopatra on the outer wall of the Temple of Hathor at Dendera. Octavian's capture of her wealth allowed him to shape the western world



German troops march through northern France to support the Spring Offensives of 1918. The events of that year had long-lasting consequences



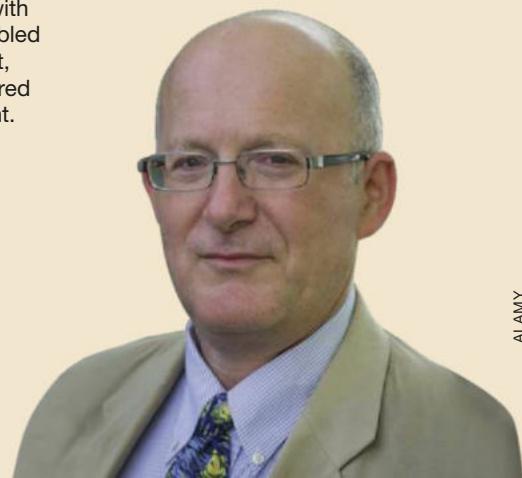
# 1918

JEREMY BLACK

**“**Years that mark the close of major wars generally reflect significant changes, but 1918 was particularly traumatic and the changes that occurred have had consequences right up to the present day. The fall of the Austrian, German and Turkish empires, and the outbreak of civil war in Russia, created long-term instability in the Balkans and the Middle East. The Cold War really began in 1918 – but as a hot war. It was a brutal revolution that set the pattern for many others.

Meanwhile, the First World War was punctuated by a series of dramatic climaxes as individual powers were knocked out of the conflict. Russia was unexpectedly removed from the fray with the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, which enabled Germany to transfer forces to the west, while American reinforcements bolstered Britain and France on the western front.

**“The Cold War really began in 1918 – but as a hot war. It was a brutal revolution that set the pattern for many others”**





# 1492

FELIPE FERNANDEZ-ARMESTO



**“** It depends what one means by ‘dramatic’: world-threatening confrontations only really began in 1945. If one means ‘most important’, the year of the creation of the cosmos takes precedence. But for a year when, more than in any other, events changed the way history seemed to be going, I still opt for the choice I made in my book, *1492*.

Previously, divergent cultures and ecosystems divided the world. Divergence began about 150 million years ago, with the fracture of Pangaea – the planet’s single landmass that poked above the

surface of the oceans. Evolution then followed a distinctive course on every drifting, mutually separating landmass. Life forms grew apart, even more spectacularly than the cultures that diverged among sundered communities, who, when they re-established contact, differed so much that they had difficulty in recognising each other as belonging to the same species.

With extraordinary suddenness, in 1492, the pattern of divergence ended. The world stumbled over the brink of an ecological revolution and, ever since, ecological exchanges have wiped out the most marked differences of the previous 150 million years.

The Old and New Worlds resumed contact, conflict, contagion and cultural exchange. A real ‘world system’ – in which events everywhere resonate together – became possible, with thoughts and transactions crossing oceans. European imperialism began to re-carve the world, appropriating the Americas, multiplying western resources, making possible the eclipse of long-hegemonic empires and economies in Asia. No other year produced changes so intense and so transformative.

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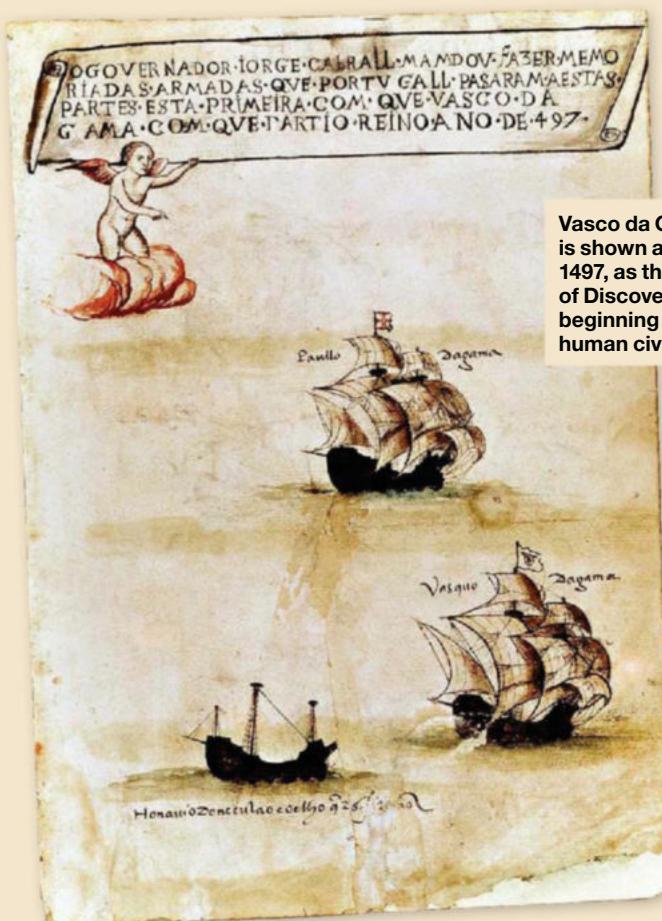
Felipe Fernandez-Armesto is the author of *1492: The Year Our World Began* (Bloomsbury, 2011)

This was not like the ends of other major wars – the events of 1814–15 or 1944–45, for example. The tide really did rush one way and then back again over just a few months.

In early 1918, the Germans hit hard with the Spring Offensives and the Allies reeled, losing territory that had earlier cost many men to capture. Governments watched nervously. In the end, the Allies stalled and then outfought the Germans. A war machine that had brought repeated victories in successive wars in 1864–71 and 1914–18 was comprehensively defeated, and German imperial power collapsed alongside that of its allies. The modern age was dramatically ushered in.

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Jeremy Black is author of *Air Power: A Global History* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2016)



Vasco da Gama’s fleet is shown at sea in 1497, as the Age of Discovery was beginning to transform human civilisation



Protestants are hacked to death on the streets of France during 1572's St Bartholomew's Day massacre – an event that "shook the world"

**"The massacre convinced many on both sides that there could be no compromise in the religious divisions of the 16th century"**

# 1572

SARAH GRISTWOOD

**“**St Bartholomew's Day 1572 was one of those days that shook the world. It started as the attempted assassination of the French Protestant leader Admiral Coligny – which was motivated as much by politics as religion. But it escalated into a months-long orgy of religious violence which spread first through Paris, and then across France, until perhaps 30,000 Huguenots were dead. The horrifying stories – pregnant women with their wombs ripped out, basketfuls of babies flung into the Seine – foreshadowed the terror that would once again rip through Paris in 1793.

This was one of those days when an act of aggression quite literally dramatised an ideological or religious conflict, so that a polarity of opinion or belief was set forth for all to see. A modern parallel is not hard to find – when the Twin Towers came down, the horror lay not solely in the

number of people who died, but in the assault on a nation's sense of security.

The effects of 9/11 were felt far beyond America's borders – but you might say the same about the massacre of St Bartholomew's Day. It gave impetus to the 'Spanish Fury' with which Protestant rebellion was being suppressed in the Netherlands (during a revolt against Spanish rule). In England it produced a climate of anxiety, and calls for the execution of the Catholic Mary, Queen of Scots.

More significantly yet, the massacre convinced many on both sides that there could be no compromise in the religious divisions of the 16th century – divisions Europe put aside only very recently.

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Sarah Gristwood's latest book is *Game of Queens: The Women Who Made 16th-century Europe* (Oneworld, 2016)



# 1956

## GEORGE GOODWIN

“ 1956 marked a new beginning. It was a time when austerity and cultural deference were being replaced by the triumph of American-style mass consumer culture. America was now top dog, a lesson brutally learned after President Eisenhower forced Britain and France to halt the Suez invasion.

The Suez debacle was a moment of exceptional importance for Britain, spawning periodic changes of national direction, with the latest this year. France, in contrast, was already beginning the process of European consolidation: the negotiations to create the European Community of 1957's Treaty of Rome were effectively decided in 1956.

Further to the east, the Soviet grip on its European conquests seriously faltered for the first time, as it violently suppressed the Hungarian uprising.

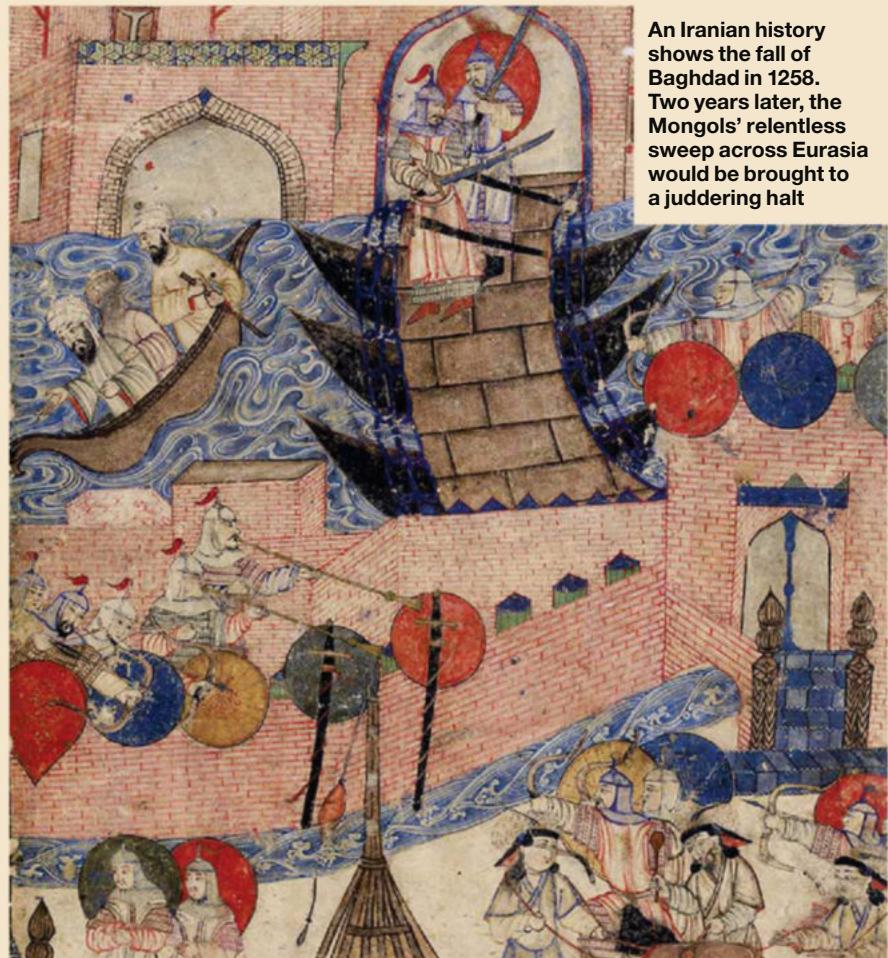
In the United States, the supreme court's ruling against bus segregation was Martin Luther King's first great civil rights victory. And the re-election of the conservative forever-golfing Eisenhower could not mask the growth of the free-spending, rebellious teenagers with a James Dean poster on the wall, *Rock Around the Clock* on the big screen and Elvis on the jukebox – a phenomenon echoed in Britain.

The Anglo-American focus on individual expression and liberation, which would dominate the following decades, was highlighted by John Osborne's 'Angry Young Man' and Allen Ginsberg's *Howl*. 1956 was a watershed year – one when we began to see the postwar world that is now under challenge.

George Goodwin is the author of *Benjamin Franklin in London: The British Life of America's Founding Father* (W&N, 2016)



Martin Luther King (above left) achieved his first great civil rights victory in 1956



An Iranian history shows the fall of Baghdad in 1258. Two years later, the Mongols' relentless sweep across Eurasia would be brought to a juddering halt

# 1260

## NICHOLAS VINCENT

“ The battle of Ain Jalut, fought in the Jezreel Valley north of Jerusalem on 3 September 1260, marked a turning point in world history a great deal more significant than the little local difficulty at Hastings 200 years before.

Since the emergence of Genghis Khan as their ruler after 1206, the Mongols – a nomadic people of the Steppes – had raided east and west, from China as far as Poland. In 1258, they had sacked the great city of Baghdad, bringing an end to the 500-year-old Abbasid Caliphate.

In 1260, they inflicted similar destruction upon the caliphate established by Saladin and his successors at Damascus. They seemed destined now to conquer the entire Mediterranean world, re-establishing a Eurasian empire unknown since the time of the Greeks and Romans.

Instead, at Ain Jalut, the Mongols were defeated by the rulers of Cairo. Against this resurgent power of Egypt, the few outposts of Christian rule in the Middle East stood

little chance of survival. Within 30 years, what remained of the crusader states had been swept away.

From Ain Jalut flowed other consequences. The Mongol empire declined into civil war, and was never again to pose a serious threat to European stability. The regions south and east of the Mediterranean developed as an Arabic-speaking Islamic enclave, in rivalry with the Christian regions to the north and west. Rome's former empire was permanently cut in two. Christian dreams of conquest now shifted to the Baltic and Atlantic worlds, ultimately carrying Christian crusader rhetoric to the newly discovered lands of Africa and the New World. Not until Lepanto in 1571 was another battle so decisively to alter the fate not just of nations but entire continents. ■

Nicholas Vincent is professor of medieval history at the University of East Anglia

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# The 14th century... when things weren't what they used to be

**Hannah Skoda** explores how late medieval Europe saw an upsurge in misty-eyed yearning for the 'good old days'



“**W**hen Adam dug and Eve span,  
Who was then a gentleman?” So spoke John Ball, one of the leaders of the 1381 Peasants’ Revolt, and a fiery, rousing preacher. As reported in the chronicle of Thomas Walsingham, Ball evoked a lost world, in which men were equal, free and dignified. Protesters should, declared Ball, like “a good husbandman... uprooting the tares [weeds] that are accustomed to destroy the grain”, rise up to restore this age of liberty.

Ball drew on a nostalgic image of a rural idyll – where all worked hard, and were justly rewarded – to provide a vision of hope for the future. A letter from one rebel, Jack Trewman, argued that “falseness and deceit have reigned too long, and truth has been set under lock and key, and falseness now reigns everywhere”. The rhetoric was powerful with its vivid alliterations, rhymes and appeal to a nostalgic for a past golden age.

But nostalgia was not the exclusive preserve of the rebels. If the peasants claimed that they wanted a return to “the good old laws” of yesteryear, Walsingham conversely accused them of trying to “wipe out... the memory of ancient customs”. His language appealed to a conservative nostalgia for a rigid social order when peasants knew their place. This rhetoric was mirrored in sermons that lamented the passing of a better age when social hierarchies were apparently stable and people just got on with their work. “The world is transposed upside-down,” cried one 14th-century preacher.

That’s the genius of nostalgia – it can be used to bolster two utterly conflicting arguments. This yearning for an idealised past can rouse radicalism, but it can also sustain reactionary fears.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* describes nostalgia as a “sentimental longing for or regretful memory of a period of the past”. Or, as a medieval proverb, put it: “It’s in the evening that we look back on the day with pleasure.” In short, it’s something we can all identify with.

### Compulsive weeping

The term ‘nostalgia’ was invented by Johannes Höfer, a Swiss doctor, in 1688. He was alarmed by the levels of homesickness that seemed to be affecting many patients, particularly Swiss mercenary soldiers operating in the lowlands of Italy and France, in the 17th century. Höfer identified physical symptoms that included compulsive weeping, anorexia and palpitations. More



recently psychologists have offered a more nuanced interpretation of nostalgia – and have concluded that sometimes it can cheer us up. Importantly, whereas the term was invented to describe longing for home, it has now come to mean longing for a past time.

Today it's widely assumed that nostalgia is a modern phenomenon. Discombobulated by the rapid pace of change in the industrialised world, modern people, so the theory goes, express unprecedented levels of yearning for a time when life was more predictable and slower-paced. The truth, however, is rather different.

The term may not have been coined until the 17th century, but there's nothing new about nostalgia. Medieval literature is peppered with it – and the 14th century, it seems, saw a particular spike. It was during this century that the French knight Geoffroi de la Tour Landry wrote: "Things aren't what they used to be/How I long for the old times again!" And Geoffroi was far from alone in donning rose-tinted spectacles and using the past to critique the present. In fact, it seems that he was in many ways reflecting the mood of his times.

But why? Is it because nostalgia is a human trait that stretches beyond modern preoccupations? Or was the 14th century ripe for this kind of reflection on the past because some of those same features of modernity – such as rapid change and commercialisation – were already emerging?

### Shock of the new

The 14th century was indeed a time of cataclysmic change throughout Europe. There was horrific famine in the first half of the century, up to 50 per cent of the population was wiped out by recurrent epidemic plague, and warfare ravaged much of the countryside. It was also a time of rapid commercialisation: business and banking practices grew ever-more sophisticated, lending at interest intensified, prices fluctuated as never before.

The rise of merchants – who now routinely

**The humanist Petrarch wrote that Italian mercenaries now "snort and perspire not manfully but as women or buffoons"**

travelled across Europe – coupled with the job opportunities provided by mass mortality and rapid urbanisation across the continent, seemed to stimulate unprecedented social mobility. As the poet Dante Alighieri put it in his early 14th-century *Purgatorio*: "The former age rebukes the new."

These changes provoked both individual and collective nostalgia. On the one hand, we find a figure like the successful Prato merchant, Francesco Datini, writing to his wife Marguerita about how much he misses the sights and smells of home when he is away on business. On the other hand, and more visible to the historian, nostalgia was a source of widespread social unease. The late 14th-century English romance poem *Sir Tryamour* expresses it pithily: "The goodness of our forefathers has now entirely gone."

These writers were not entirely innovating. The poet John Gower evoked the sense of transience in modern times by referencing Boethius (AD 480–524), and wrote: "The fortune of the present day has forsaken the blessed life of the past."

In the face of rapid urbanisation, writers in the 14th century harked back to an imagined pastoral idyll. In doing so, they were drawing on earlier medieval troubadour poetry (itself perhaps inspired by Arabic poetry) and on classical ideas of a bucolic utopia dating back to Virgil and Horace. But in the 14th century, these idylls were used to criticise the evils of city life.

Much of the nostalgia of the century was provoked by anxiety about commercialisation, what looked like increasingly erratic prices, and monetary debasement. Sermons criticised the pride and avarice of merchants by referring back to a time when traders were not motivated by greed. A sermon now in St Albans Cathedral archive tells of "the just weights and measures" of the past, now manipulated and used for cheating. The poet John Gower elucidated: "In olden days, people behaved properly, without deceit, and without envy. Their buying and selling was honest, without trickery." Bishop Brinton warned that "false traders in these days infringe the rule of justice".

Nostalgia could also have a political edge. Boniface VIII, pope and arch-enemy of Philip IV of France, contrasted the king's conduct with "the happy actions of your forefathers" and their "sincere devotion". Similar themes were apparent in England. A late medieval English poem lamented: "Once upon a time we had an English ship/It was noble and had high towers."

Preachers accused current monarchs of neglecting the wellbeing of their citizens. It was a powerful rhetoric, almost guaranteed to appeal to popular emotion. In the context

# “In the olden days, children that were **rebellious and disobedient to their parents** were beaten,” lamented a sermon

of the growing weakness of the English position in the Hundred Years’ War against France, one sermon claimed that in the past “all Christian kings feared us and spoke of our victory and courage”. Philippe de Mézières, a late 14th-century French knight, described the effects of the Hundred Years’ War on his own country by evoking his childhood, when “the kingdom was rich and [somewhat enigmatically] as full as an egg”.

## The rot sets in

In Italy, writers painted the century as a time of degeneration, employing past glories to criticise the present. In Florence, they couldn’t quite agree about which period to be nostalgic about. Chroniclers such as Giovanni Villani looked back on the 13th century as a time of military, political and commercial prowess: “They were loyal and faithful... they did greater and more virtuous deeds than are performed in our own time.” But Dante Alighieri argued that the rot had set in earlier than that. His nostalgia was for the 12th century, the time when “Florence [was] in such tranquillity that she had nothing to cause her grief”.

Fifty years later, in his own writings on Dante, the poet Boccaccio complained that the city (and its art) “once ennobled by geniuses... is now itself corrupted by avarice”. Boccaccio was writing after famine and epidemic disease had wiped out huge swathes of the population, enabling the labourers who did survive to demand better remuneration. He would take up this theme to castigate the corruption of the manners by “new men”. He saw inappropriate clothing as a potent symbol of the pernicious effects of social mobility. In England, the preacher Rypon fumed that: “The garments... of those who were once noble are now divided as spoil... among grooms, and maid-servants and prostitutes.”

Boccaccio’s fulminations were echoed in legislation that attempted to regulate the kinds of clothing people of each social station were permitted to wear – and to

evoke, through law, a former age.

Yet it wasn’t just those trying to fight their way up the social ladder who were failing to live up to their predecessors’ supposed high standards. Apparently, knights also had forgotten their calling. Chivalry had always been founded on a longing for the good old days of King Arthur, but the intensity of this nostalgia was ratcheted up a notch in the 14th century. The chronicler Jean le Bel wistfully remarked: “These days a humble page is as well and as finely armed as a noble knight. Things have changed a lot I feel.”

Chivalry’s fall from grace was partly driven by a sense that modern knights no longer knew how to fight, only to dress up. The preacher Bromyard compared the pretentious flourishes of modern knights with the “strenuous battling... of the knights of antiquity – Charlemagne, Roland and Oliver”. In the past, apparently, knights were *real* men. The early humanist Petrarch wrote of Italian mercenaries that they lack the “antico valore”, and now “snort and perspire not manfully, but feverishly, not as soldiers, but as women or buffoons”.

If this was about status, it was also about sex. “Once upon a time, young men were ashamed of their dishonourable hidden thoughts; nowadays, they go round showing off things that even animals would gladly conceal if they only could,” ranted one holier-than-thou preacher.

Even children no longer knew their place. “In the olden days, children that were rebellious and disobedient to their fathers and mothers were beaten,” a misty-eyed sermon lamented of times gone by.

In short, a sense of melancholic nostalgia permeated the century. It could be radical, as in the Peasants’ Revolt; it could be reactionary; and it affected the entire social spectrum. The words ‘ubi sunt?’ – ‘Where have they gone?’ – became a catchphrase for the times, embodying a sense of transience and a yearning for a happier past.

In the mid-15th century, the poet François Villon wrote wistfully: “Where are the snows of yesteryear?” Everything melts away, and people in the later Middle Ages were acutely aware that war, commercialisation, political change and disease were transforming their lives. As Chaucer wrote in his poem *The Former Age*: “A blissful, peaceful and sweet life/was led by people in the olden days.” H

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**Hannah Skoda** is associate professor of medieval history at St John’s College, Oxford

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## THE **HISTORY** ESSAY



Stokely Carmichael addresses the crowd during the final rally of the March Against Fear in June 1966. It was during a similar gathering that same summer that Carmichael uttered the famous words: "What we gonna start saying now is Black Power!"

# THE FIGHT FOR BLACK AMERICA

Characterising Black Power as the civil rights movement's 'evil twin' masks its considerable achievements over the past 50 years

**By Peter Ling**

**B**y the time two African American sprinters raised their black gloved fists in salute from the medal rostrum at the 1968 Olympics, Black Power had established itself as the clarion call of black America. From the beginning it had been a movement shaped by the media, and arguably, systematically

misrepresented. Cameras had captured the moment when lone protester James Meredith was felled by a shotgun blast early in his 'March Against Fear' along the highways of Mississippi in June 1966. As Meredith lay in hospital, national civil rights leaders, and even more journalists, had then continued the march, despite threats. Later that month, after being released by local police, the youngest leader, Stokely Carmichael, addressed a crowd of marchers near Greenwood. Visibly angry, he declared that: "The only way we gonna stop them white men from whupping us is to take over. We been saying 'Freedom' for six years and we ain't got nothin."

Encouraged by fellow Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) members, the crowd responded to Stokely's call, "What do we want?", with the words, "Black Power!" Television transmitted the angry rally to the nation in the same way that it had earlier captured Martin Luther King's 'I Have a Dream' oration. But, as many were confronted by the term 'Black Power' for the first time, the emotions elicited among white viewers were very different, drawing less upon their ideals than on their nightmares.

Fifty years later, schoolchildren around the world know King's speech yet, arguably, Carmichael's call for Black Power resonates more powerfully for contemporary black Americans. Even with Obama in the White House, the power to protect and enhance black lives seems elusive. Nevertheless, at a commemorative event on 17 June, the anniversary of Carmichael's speech, the president did not speak. In fact, he tends to ignore the phrase – in the eyes of some, this is because the continuing demand for Black Power undercuts his own status as a symbol of African American empowerment.

Carmichael saw Black Power as a basis for unity, yet from the outset, with media assistance, it strengthened division. When the civil rights leaders gathered to continue the Meredith March, Carmichael clashed with the leader of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Roy Wilkins, who promptly disassociated his organisation from the campaign. Wilkins was sharply critical about the 'Black Power' slogan later that summer, describing it as "the father of hatred and the mother of violence". This bolstered the media's framing of Black Power as the unruly and self-destructive successor of the civil rights movement. Rapidly, a stereotype emerged

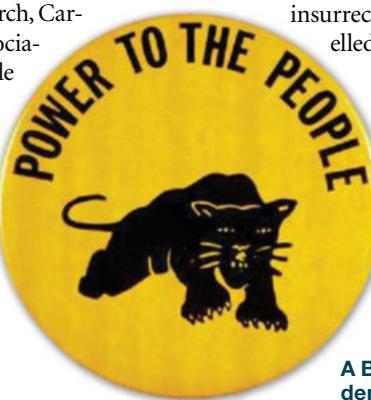
that presented Black Power activists as intrinsically violent and anti-white; the complete opposite (supposedly) of the earlier, nonviolent and integrationist movement. As historian Peniel Joseph puts it, Black Power was depicted, even by scholars, as the civil rights movement's "evil twin".

Events sharpened the caricature. The summer of 1966 saw the urban uprising that had shaken Los Angeles in 1965 spread to Chicago. In Oakland, California, Huey Newton and Bobby Seale founded the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense and focused its efforts on policing the police with armed patrols. Newspapers and TV channels brought images of looted stores, burning cars and leather-jacketed, black-bereted militants into white homes across the nation, sparking fears of a race war. The American right, which had seemed doomed after the landslide victory of Lyndon Johnson over its standard-bearer Barry Goldwater in the presidential election of 1964, rebounded. Ronald Reagan won the California governorship and the mid-term Congressional elections saw liberal losses. Election pundits and civil rights moderates were quick to blame black militancy for the conservative turn.

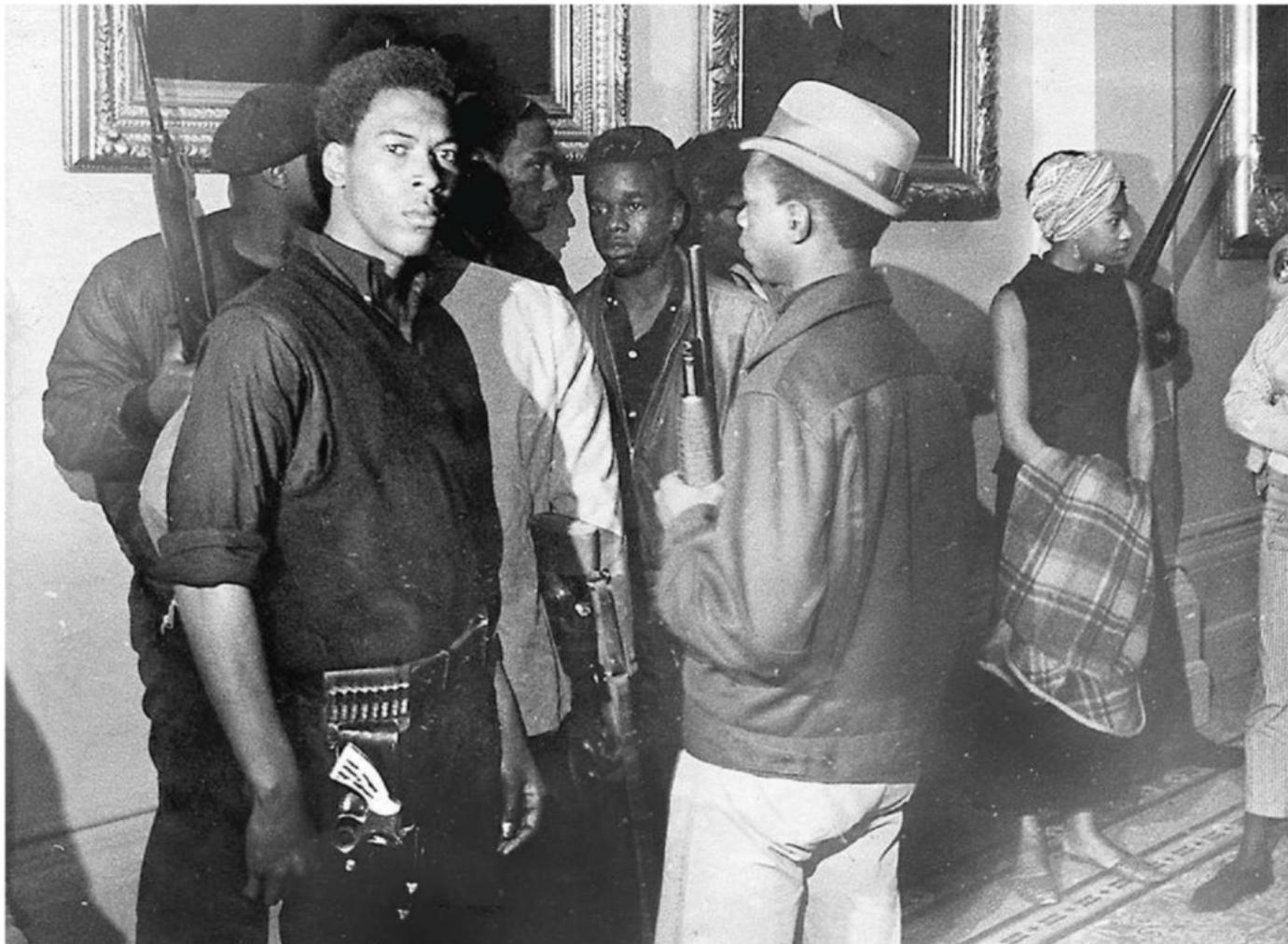
The new mood affected everything from politics to hairstyles. When an internal government report on the black family, written by Daniel P Moynihan, was leaked, its key finding – that African American poverty was linked to high levels of single-parent, female-headed households – was denounced as a racist attempt to blame the victim.

As the natural or Afro look became one expression of a 'Black is beautiful' movement, sales of hair straightening products plummeted. When white writer William Styron's 1967 novel *The Confessions of Nat Turner* won the Pulitzer Prize, black intellectuals scorned the very idea that a white man could imagine what it was like to be a black insurrectionist (and Styron's negative portrayal of Turner fuelled their outrage).

In April 1967 Dr King reasserted his own radicalism by denouncing US involvement in Vietnam. When Muhammad Ali refused to serve in Vietnam later that month, saying "I ain't got no quarrel with them Vietcong", he was stripped of his world heavyweight title, convicted of draft evasion, and sentenced initially to five years in prison with a \$10,000 fine. A month later, the Panthers increased their notoriety by staging an armed protest at the



A Black Panther badge and slogan demands militancy and democracy



**Armed Black Panthers at the California state-house, protesting a proposed gun control bill, May 1967. Headline-grabbing, shock tactics reinforced mainstream perceptions that Black Power meant violence**

California state-house which was set to consider outlawing the open carrying of firearms, a key facet of the Panthers' programme. That summer, Newark and Detroit were wracked by the most violent ghetto disturbances yet, and in October a shoot-out involving Panther leader Huey Newton left a white police officer dead and Newton indicted for murder.

**T**he media's association of Black Power with violence and anti-white feeling intensified, providing the rationale for a wide-ranging programme of state repression, overseen by the FBI in collaboration with local police. Tactics included infiltrating Black Power groups to foment internal divisions and encourage actions likely to expose groups to prosecution. In 1969, Chicago Panther leader Fred Hampton was shot dead during a police raid, in an incident that many regard as a political assassination. In 1970, the FBI issued wanted posters for Angela Davis as an accessory to an attempted courtroom escape that left a judge dead. She was the third woman to appear on the FBI's Ten Most

Wanted list, and the first to sport an Afro. Reflecting on the legacy of her Black Power activism, Davis has lamented that she wanted a revolution but ended up being treated as a fashion statement.

Despite the fact that armed violence was more often used against Black Power groups than by them, the media consensus was that they were violent and threatening. Black Power leaders frequently extolled the merits of armed struggle, quoting Mao's dictum that "power comes from the barrel of a gun", and embraced the anti-colonial rhetoric of Frantz Fanon, a psychiatrist who worked with the Algerian liberation movement and argued that armed resistance was vital since fighting back was mentally liberating. Further lurid headlines grew from the fact that Black Power groups recruited people with troubled pasts: former convicts and gang members. Panther minister of information Eldridge Cleaver confessed he was a rapist; even describing his attacks on white women as "an insurrectionary act." The shocking confession was used against the Panthers, and the FBI exploited past gang ties and drug addiction in its campaign.

Black Power also fed the fears of communist subversion that had generated the McCarthyite purges in the 1950s. To white Americans,

## THE HISTORY ESSAY

Black Power stood accused of widening the gulf between an underclass that lived in broken communities and a middle-class America that shopped online and watched cable by the pool



**Stokely Carmichael and Charles Hamilton's book *Black Power* inspired the Olympic sprinters' famous protest in 1968**

faced with the nightly news of more combat deaths in Vietnam, black militants were so anti-American as to be un-American. Black cultural nationalism expressed in African dress or the adoption of Swahili names and greetings bemused them. In petitions to the UN, the Republic of New Africa group renewed calls for the establishment of an African American homeland in the Cotton Belt of the South, partly as reparations for slavery. The League of Revolutionary Black Workers grew from the longstanding presence of communist organisers within the labour movement. By the late 1960s, in unions like the United Auto Workers, African Americans were demanding greater militancy in shop-floor disputes rather than just accepting annual contract negotiations that tended to favour white workers. In each case, Black Power confirmed conservative fears and drove a wedge between black militancy and white liberals.

In his co-authored book, *Black Power*, Carmichael urged closing ranks and especially exploiting the political advantages of bloc voting wherever African Americans were the majority. As major cities like Chicago and Detroit became increasingly African American, black voters could elect black councillors and even black mayors. Carmichael also argued that coalitions with white people needed to be entered provisionally in a calculated fashion – in other words, only as long as they respected black priorities. He warned that black politicians needed to be kept close to the people lest they prioritise their self-interest. In practice, many African American politicians, from Tom Bradley in his 1973 race to become mayor of Los Angeles to Barack Obama in his 2008 bid to be president, calculated that they had the black vote and focused instead on reaching out to the white electorate. Given the electoral victories achieved by such pragmatists, Black Power advocates were perceived as

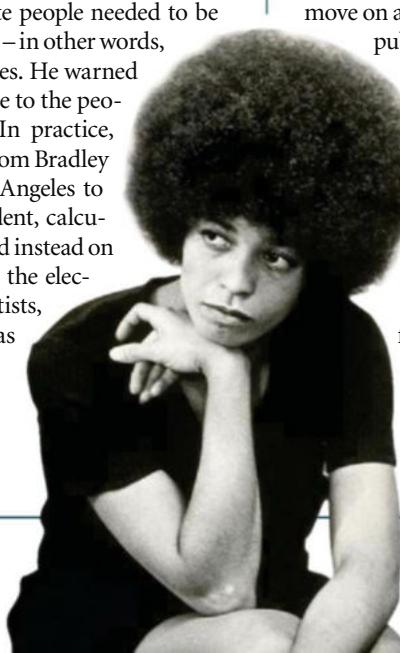
misguided by the 1980s, as an expanded African American middle class sought to protect itself from the cutbacks of the Reagan years.

The negative judgment on Black Power was well-entrenched in the history books by the time Ronald Reagan signed the law establishing the Martin Luther King national holiday in 1983. Scholars argued that the restoration of black voters due to the Voting Rights Act had been offset by the switch of southern white voters from Democrat to increasingly conservative Republican. They also contended that the election of black mayors in Chicago, Detroit, Los Angeles, New York and elsewhere had been undermined by the white flight that destroyed the metropolitan tax base amid a massive relocation of jobs and homes that amounted to the de facto re-segregation of America. Black Power thus helped to create the gulf between an underclass that live in broken communities beset by drugs and gang wars and a middle-class America that shops online and watches cable by the pool, sometimes sampling the gritty awfulness of ghetto life via hip-hop videos and crime drama.

**I**n the last two decades, however, the scholarship has changed and offers a more nuanced portrait in which Black Power traits were part of the classic civil rights movement, not its antithesis. Figures like Robert Williams of Monroe, North Carolina, who responded to the growing white segregationist harassment of the late 1950s by organising armed resistance, were rediscovered. Alongside Williams' story, there emerged a broader acknowledgement that in the rural South, armed self-defence was the norm – nonviolence coexisted with armed resistance. Mississippi Freedom Summer volunteers remember being hosted in homes where adults stood guard nightly with a shotgun on the porch. At the same time, scholars questioned the narrow focus on the South that meant that the struggles in northern cities against police brutality, job and housing discrimination, and acute racial inequality had been largely ignored.

In her 2004 presidential address to the Organization of American Historians, Jacquelyn Dowd Hall advocated a “long civil rights movement” to counter the trend to picture the movement as a finished story in which a heroic Martin Luther King confronted America non-violently with its sins and the nation recanted, allowing Americans to move on as a post-racial nation. This lie, she argued, was implicit in public memory that celebrated the removal of segregation signs in the South but ignored the myriad injustices that the movement had continued to address nationally.

The “long civil rights movement” was about earlier phases of the struggle in the 1930s and 1940s, but also about later campaigns. As part of this, the Black Panther Party has been re-examined and reappraised. By 1970 it had nearly 5,000 members across more than 20 states and its chapters were strongest where they strove to address local needs in practical ways. The ‘free breakfast’ programme typified this approach, providing a



**Angela Davis, an intellectual linked to the Black Panther movement, has lamented that the media focus was often on her hairstyle**



**Brad Jones, a member of the Philadelphia Black Panthers, serves breakfast to youngsters in March 1970.**  
By then, 20,000 children a week were fed as part of the Panthers' 'survival' programme

From supreme court justices to celebrity talk show hosts, African Americans have more cultural power today because of the anger of Black Power



**Muhammad Ali in New York with members of the Black Panther Party, September 1970.** Black Power supporters were widely regarded as anti-American, and Ali's refusal to serve in the Vietnam War did little to dispel this perception

nourishing morning meal to 20,000 children weekly. Similarly, the Panther community health clinics pioneered screening for sickle cell anaemia.

**A**s repression intensified, the party's survival rested on its ties to local people, and eventually these ties enabled some Panthers to become elected officials. The most conspicuous example is Illinois congressman Bobby Rush, whose support among local black residents was so strong by 2000 that he was able to resist a challenge to his re-election by political newcomer Barack Obama.

It has been argued too that cultural victories are as important as the legislative victories of the civil rights movement. The place of African American culture in American culture changed not because of desegregation and voting rights, but because Black Power

articulated a racial pride and supported an artistic renaissance that compelled white cultural institutions – from universities to television stations – to accept that African Americans should be treated with dignity and on their own terms. What conservatives still decry as political correctness in racial matters is actually a measure of how far white America has come to accept the reality of Black Power. From supreme court justices to celebrity talk show hosts, African Americans have more cultural power today because of the anger of Black Power. ■

**Peter Ling** is professor of American studies at the University of Nottingham and the author of *Martin Luther King Jr* (Routledge, 2015)

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► **Waiting 'Til the Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America** by Peniel E Joseph (Henry Holt, 2011)

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# The six wives in a different light

From the scheming sophisticate who lost her head, to the hapless 'mare' who repulsed the king, the reputations of Henry VIII's spouses are secure. But do the stereotypes stand up to scrutiny? **Lucy Worsley** investigates

Accompanies the BBC One series *Six Wives with Lucy Worsley*



## Catherine of Aragon

She's been cast as a humourless Spanish harridan, but Catherine was highly popular in England

Bitter, conservative, graceless: Henry's first wife (married 1509–33) has often been portrayed as a foreign harridan, lecturing her erring husband about the loyalty he lacked. This is the picture painted by Protestant historians who disliked her deeply held traditional religious views.

But, today, Catherine enjoys a far more favourable press – one that reflects the adulatory views that many of her subjects held about a queen whom they loved to the end. When Henry abandoned Catherine (he had the marriage annulled), these subjects thought of her as a wronged woman, while Anne Boleyn, her younger, sexier, replacement, was "the goggle-eyed whore". For most of the nearly 24-year marriage, Catherine

was Henry's beloved wife.

She is renowned for her Spanish background – but portraits show her as surprisingly blonde. Daughter of the powerful 'warrior queen' Isabella of Castile, and given a royal education, Catherine was by far the best-qualified of Henry's wives to be queen. He trusted her to rule as regent when he was fighting in France. In fact, when Catherine's army defeated the Scots at the battle of Flodden in 1513, she was in danger of out-shining her husband.

Even her much-mentioned infertility has been overplayed: she conceived six times, but five children died (she was mother of the future Mary I). No longer seen as an inflexible foreigner, Catherine is a figure to admire.



## Anne Boleyn

A manipulative minx or a Protestant martyr? Actually, Anne was neither

Anne had an extra finger on one hand, didn't she? Sure sign that she was a witch. She has been vilified for centuries as the 'other woman' who stole Henry VIII – a woman who even had magical powers. An influential minority of historians today still believe she was guilty of the crimes for which she was beheaded in 1536, and did do some of the outrageous things of which she was accused at her trial.

A clever and charismatic

woman like Anne inevitably excites condemnation, but neither should we go too far in the other direction. She certainly wasn't a saint, a contrasting view that has competed with her 'sorceress' image ever since her daughter, Elizabeth, became queen and the Protestant side 'won' the religion argument.

Elizabethan historians recreated Anne as a religious radical, almost a proto-Protestant martyr, trying to bring about

a new order, and being punished for this by conservative forces. But the reality is muddy. The Reformation wasn't a mighty struggle between two opposing forces, but a patchy, uncertain affair.

And some modern historians discount the idea that Anne was as intellectually progressive as her fan club like to suggest. Others have disputed the idea that she was framed by a faction formed against her. Yet,

counter-balancing this, Hilary Mantel's *Wolf Hall* has had the effect of placing Thomas Cromwell firmly back in the centre of the drama as Anne's enemy.

The one thing that's clear is that Anne, with her intelligence and sexiness, played a part in her own destiny. Her choices in life often make her seem more like a modern person than a Tudor woman. That's why she'll continue to fascinate us.

## Jane Seymour

Far from being a doormat, it seems that Jane played her husband perfectly

There's a gap in the historical record where Jane Seymour's personality should be. But could the secret of Jane's success be her restful, passive nature? As her personal motto stated, Jane felt "bound to obey and serve". Perhaps Henry was glad to avoid the high drama he'd put up with from Catherine of Aragon and Anne Boleyn. And quiet Jane Seymour was one of 10 siblings: she looked likely to be a good breeder.

Historians have built up the best picture they can with only a tiny handful of clues to Jane's character. There was an incident prior to marriage when she refused a gift of gold coins from the king, possibly an attempt to 'play' him by standing up to him. Then, there were her pleas for the monasteries to be spared destruction: perhaps she was making the case for the old religion. But both may also be seen simply as aspects of the traditional role of a queen – virtuous, focused on marriage, interceding on behalf of the vulnerable.

Whatever the nature of Jane's charm, there is no doubt that the story that she died following a Caesarian is anti-Henrician propaganda. Henry's Catholic enemies believed that he was capable of cutting open his wife to get at his baby. But the reality is that Jane probably succumbed to straightforward septicemia (a matter of days after giving birth to the future Edward VI in October 1537). This cemented her image as the perfect wife, who died before Henry could get bored with her. In this case, the myth might really be the reality.



## Anne of Cleves

She's been the butt of a thousand jokes but the 'Flanders Mare' was a canny survivor

Henry went shopping for a new wife, fell in love with Holbein's flattering portrait of Anne, and was thrown into a rage by the reality. The marriage (lasting just seven months in 1540) was a disaster.

In reality, Henry's failure to find Anne attractive – and consummate the marriage – had a political element. An alliance with her German brother, a reformed Catholic, held political attractions that faded as the situation in Europe shifted.

Anne's biographer Retha Warnicke argues that her full figure made Henry

believe her to be sexually experienced, tainted, and thus unworthy of him. But historians also point out that their sexual incompatibility could have stemmed from Henry – was the fat old king now impotent?

Either way, the 'fault' for the failure of this marriage did not lie with Anne, and she made a dignified exit by agreeing to a divorce. Her survival skills have been underestimated. She lived until 1557 – the last of the six wives to die – and has a grander resting place, too, right by the high altar of Westminster Abbey.

# Catherine Howard

We should feel only pity for this tragic victim of unscrupulous older men

Of all Henry VIII's wives, it is Catherine Howard who has undergone the biggest transformation of image in recent years. Catherine used to be thought of as a silly little girl, and she has been described even by highly respectable historians as an "empty-headed wanton", or even as a "juvenile delinquent".

Catherine's downfall in 1541 came about when evidence that she had a sexual past was brought to her husband's attention. Investigations revealed that while growing up in the household of her step-grandmother, the Duchess of Norfolk, Catherine had had physical relationships with two servants. These were music teacher Henry Manox, and Francis Dereham, who admitted having had "carnal knowledge" of the future queen. But today these illicit liaisons between older men and a young girl look to us

very much like child abuse. It was common knowledge in the duchess's household that it was possible to obtain the key to the dormitory where the household's maidens slept together, supposedly for safety. It looks like Catherine, who went to the block in 1542, was a damaged survivor.

What about the apparently damning evidence of her 'love letter' to Thomas Culpepper, written after she married Henry, and when she was certainly old enough to know better? Well, her statements of affection certainly can be read as placating a man who'd previously been accused of rape and murder, who knew her background, and who was using it against her.

There's been no more striking example than Catherine Howard of how changing attitudes to women have changed our interpretation of one of Henry's wives.



## Katherine Parr

The saintly nurse of popular imagination was, in fact, an influential radical

The 19th-century historian Agnes Strickland did much to create the impression that Katherine was some kind of saintly nurse. She imagined her as the sort of woman whom the Victorians would have found an admirable wife for an old and sick man.

There still remains a powerful image of her changing the bandages on her husband's ulcerated leg, perhaps enduring the smell to sit with him in order to comfort him. This is misleading, though, because the king had a team of male servants and doctors to give him 'body service'. His queen certainly would not have done it.

More recently, historians have recreated Katherine as a bluestocking, interested in radical religion, using her position to promote an agenda of change in the light of Henry's increasing conservatism. She was, after all, the first woman to publish a book in English under her own name, which was called *Prayers or Meditations*. She was responsible for the excellent education given to her step-daughter, Elizabeth I, perhaps our greatest queen ever. Katherine was an intellectual powerhouse. ■

**Lucy Worsley** is chief curator at Historic Royal Palaces. She is author of *Eliza Rose*, a historical novel for young readers about the Tudor court (Bloomsbury Childrens, 2016)

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### TELEVISION

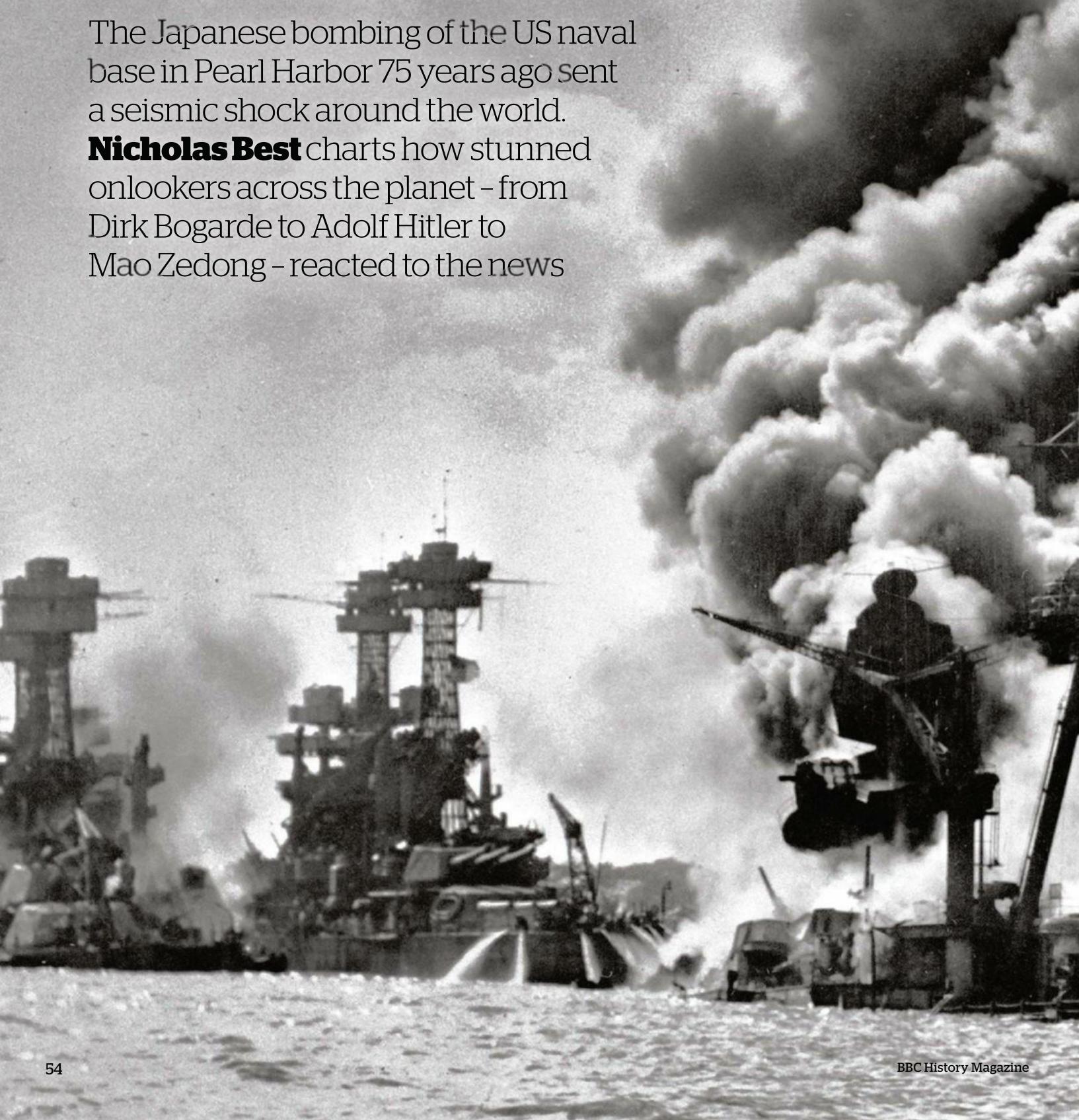
► The BBC One series **Six Wives with Lucy Worsley** is due to air in December. We'll be previewing the series at [historyextra.com](http://historyextra.com)



# “The Yanks

The Japanese bombing of the US naval base in Pearl Harbor 75 years ago sent a seismic shock around the world.

**Nicholas Best** charts how stunned onlookers across the planet – from Dirk Bogarde to Adolf Hitler to Mao Zedong – reacted to the news



# are in!"



#### **The day of infamy**

US battleships are consumed by flames in the aftermath of the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941. By that same evening, Americans' fury at the attack was already leading to calls for retribution

**J**oan Fawcett rose early on the morning of 7 December 1941. The 21-year-old Englishwoman was a passenger aboard the Dutch ship *Jägersfontein*, travelling to India from San Francisco. After several days at sea, she was looking forward to arriving in Honolulu soon after breakfast. Joan didn't want to miss a moment as the ship approached the Hawaiian island of Oahu from the south.

The other passengers were up early too. They were all enjoying the view of Diamond Head as they prepared to enter harbour. To add to the fun, the US navy was carrying out some sort of naval exercise ahead of them. As Joan later recalled: "I noticed a few puffs of grey smoke in the sky, just over the harbour, and as they seemed queer clouds I asked the boys what explanation they could give and we decided that they were the puffs from anti-aircraft fire.

"By this time there were many grey spots and soon we could hear the report of the guns. We thought it was just a practice manoeuvre and a welcome salute for us..."

"By nine o'clock we had had breakfast and were all up on deck watching the planes fly over. We did see things drop into the water, and one only 50 yards away, but thought nothing more of it. Later we heard eight bombs were aimed at our ship. We made a beautiful target for we were entering the harbour, and being in the mined area could not swerve left or right in the cleared channel. We were thoroughly enjoying the display."

The ship's agent hurried aboard as soon as they docked. He told the passengers it was no exercise. The US navy's Pacific fleet up the coast at Pearl Harbor was being attacked by the Japanese. Within hours, news of the outrage was racing around the world, leaving people shocked, dismayed – and, in some cases, delighted – in its wake.

## The bombers appear

The attack was Japan's response to the crippling sanctions imposed on the country by the United States. In an attempt to bring the Japanese invasions of China and Indo-China to an end, the Americans had frozen all Japan's assets in the US. They had also put an embargo on the exports that Japan needed to wage war. These included gas, steel, scrap metal and, most crucially, oil.

In order to secure the supplies that they needed, the Japanese had therefore decided to invade various mineral-rich countries in south-east Asia, including Java and Malaya. To do so, they first had to put

the American fleet out of action for at least six months.

The raid on Pearl Harbor was intended to sink all the US aircraft carriers at anchor. Unfortunately for the Japanese, and most unusually for a weekend, the carriers were all at sea that Sunday morning. The attackers had to make do with the battleships instead.

Thirteen-year-old Michael Cunningham-Reid was watching from Alewa Heights as the Japanese appeared. He and his brother Noel were the sons of Conservative MP Alec Cunningham-Reid and his wife, Ruth Mary Clarisse Ashley, the younger sister of Lady Edwina Mountbatten (wife of Louis, a descendant of Queen Victoria). In view of their royal connection, the boys had been evacuated to put them beyond the reach of a German invasion.

They had fetched up on ultra-safe Oahu because of their father's close relationship with the tobacco heiress Doris Duke. Said to be America's richest woman, she kept a holiday home on the island and had agreed to act as the boys' guardian during their stay.

Michael watched fascinated as the bombers appeared overhead: "These strange-looking planes came in, not very fast. They were floating, they had cut their engines, and they all appeared over the hill, masses of them coming down very quietly. They must have been about 300 feet above us, if that, and every one of the Japanese pilots waved to me as they went over... They were getting smaller and we saw explosions all over the place."

Noel decided to alert their next door neighbour. Frank Tremaine was an agency reporter, the Hawaii bureau chief for United Press (UP). Fast asleep after a heavy night at the officers' club on Waikiki Beach, he wasn't happy to be woken by a British kid at an ungodly hour on a Sunday morning.

"I've got a scoop for you," Noel told him. "The Japanese are attacking us."

Unimpressed, Tremaine mumbled something about naval manoeuvres.

"If you just come out of the house, I think you'll see that it's not manoeuvres," Noel insisted.

**Marlene Dietrich was  
delighted to learn  
that the US had been  
attacked and that it  
had woken up at last**

Tremaine took one look at the sky and ran for the phone. His first act was to send a cable to the mainland, saying Pearl Harbor was under aerial attack. He then booked a telephone call to UP's San Francisco office, told his wife what to say when the call came through, and sped to Pearl Harbor to have a closer look at the bombing.

Tremaine was still dictating eyewitness accounts down the line an hour later when the US navy cut him off. They had shut down all radio communication to the mainland to prevent further Japanese aircraft from homing in on the signal. But Tremaine had done enough by then. Thanks to Noel Cunningham-Reid, he had got the story out and pulled off the biggest scoop of his career.

## The story explodes

It was picked up at once, all over the world. Journalists everywhere dropped whatever they were working on when they learned of the attack and hurried to find out more. In New York, in a studio above Grand Central Station, the attack became American television's first breaking news story as CBS's fledgling TV reporters struggled to report it on air.

They were all experienced radio men, but television was still only experimental. Without earpieces or autocues, two terrified presenters ad-libbed all afternoon as the latest UP updates were ripped straight from the teleprinter and handed to them on camera. Behind the scenes, CBS's studio staff hurriedly scrapped the peacetime backdrop for the news room and built a wartime one from scratch. In just under four hours, they constructed a new set comprising nine different geographic areas and dominated by a map of the world covering 16 feet by 5. The war had reached America at last.

Hardly anybody was watching TV, though. Radio was still by far the biggest source of news in the United States, particularly in the heartlands. The story broke just before three in the afternoon, Washington time. By early evening, millions of Americans in three different time zones had been outraged to hear that their country had been attacked by the Japanese without even a formal declaration of war.

President Roosevelt learned of the attack soon after lunch. He knew from radio intercepts that the Japanese were about to attack somewhere, but Pearl Harbor came as a surprise. Roosevelt was as shocked as anyone that they had chosen the US fleet as their target.

He was relieved too, happy that the war was in the open at last. Roosevelt spent the afternoon chain-smoking as he

drafted a speech to deliver to Congress the next day. It has since become one of the most famous speeches in US history: "Yesterday, December 7, 1941 – a date which will live in infamy – the United States of America was suddenly and deliberately attacked by naval and air forces of the Empire of Japan. The United States was at peace with that nation and, at the solicitation of Japan, was still in conversation with its government."

### Hitting the streets

In Ithaca, New York, the future novelist Kurt Vonnegut was an undergraduate at Cornell. He was in the bath when somebody shouted the news through the door. A reluctant student (he would rather have gone straight into journalism), Vonnegut jumped out at once, dressed and ran along the street to the *Cornell Daily Sun*, where he was the night editor: "I tore down to the office, and we laid out a new first and last page, keeping the stale insides of the previous issue... We took whatever was coming off the AP machine, slapped it in, and were, I still believe, the first paper in the state to hit the streets with an extra."

Ensign Jack Kennedy of the US navy (later President Kennedy) was in Washington, driving home from a game of touch football, when he switched the radio on and heard the news. Meanwhile, Gerald Ford was driving home from his law office in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Ernest Hemingway and his wife were in Texas, enjoying a leisurely road trip down to the Gulf of Mexico. They were particularly irritated to learn of the attack because they had recently visited Pearl Harbor on their way to China. They had been shocked to see so many warships crammed together in harbour, as well as long rows of fighter planes lined up like sitting ducks on the runway.

In Hollywood, Clark Gable was in his stables, grooming the horses, when his wife, Carole Lombard, dashed out to tell him the news. Fresh from his success in the film *International Squadron*, Ronald Reagan was still in bed when his brother rang. Marlene Dietrich was doing the cooking for a dinner party. She was delighted to learn that the United States had been attacked and the Americans had woken up at last.

Wherever they were, whatever they were doing, Americans reacted first with disbelief, then with puzzlement, then growing anger and a demand for retribution as the full details of the attack emerged. Sixty years later, their reaction was much the same when the Twin Towers were attacked in New York.

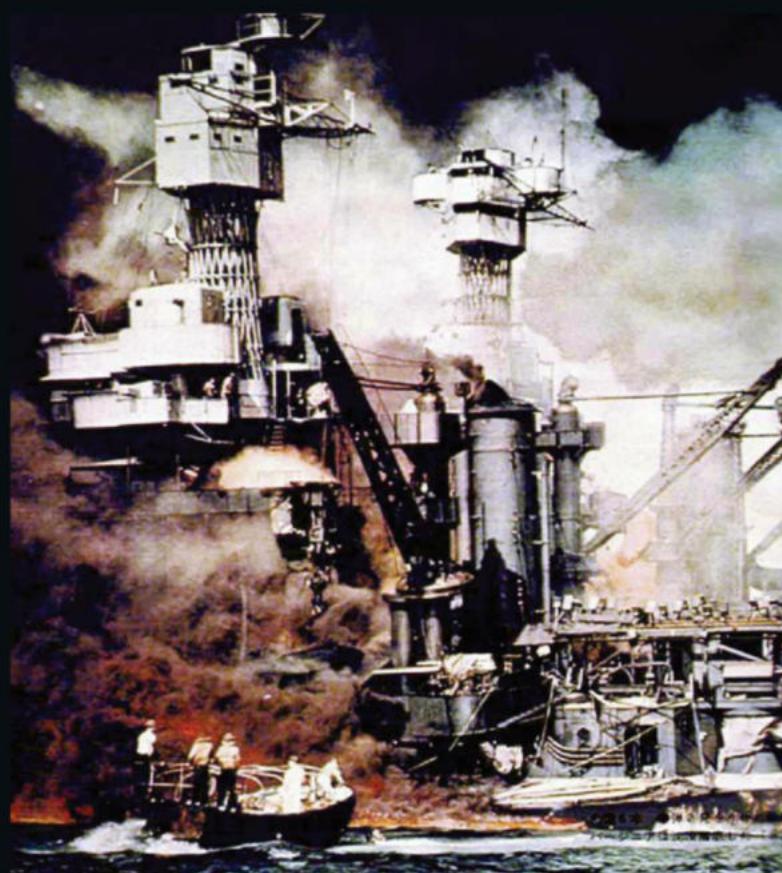
The reaction across the Atlantic was very similar too. Yet sympathy for the Americans



c1940: A call to arms  
A recruitment poster for pilots for the Imperial Japanese Navy, c1940



7 December 1941: The bombers are briefed  
Japanese newsreel shows pilots receiving their instructions before the attack. Fewer than 100 were killed, while more than 2,400 Americans died



7 December 1941: A fleet burns  
Within two hours, 188 aircraft were destroyed, five battleships sunk and another 16 damaged. Crucially, the navy's aircraft carriers were at sea



**7 December 1941: The news is out**

The US reels as news of the attack spreads. Americans react "with disbelief, then puzzlement, then growing anger and demands for retribution"



**8 December 1941: The US enters the fray**

After a unanimous senate vote, and having addressed the nation on the radio, Roosevelt signs the declaration of war against Japan



**8 December 1941: Japan strikes again**

Papers report the president's decisive response, alongside news of Japan's surprise attack on the Philippines, just hours after Pearl Harbor

was tempered by a feeling that it was about time they woke up. The overwhelming reaction to Pearl Harbor in Britain and Nazi-occupied Europe was not outrage, but relief that the world's mightiest industrial power was joining the fight at last. A British squaddie explained it succinctly to Lance Corporal Dirk Bogarde when he burst into his room at Catterick: "The Japs have gone and bombed some bloody harbour in Hawaii. The Yanks are in!"

It was late in the evening by then, past nine o'clock on the Sunday night, when the BBC announced the attack on the radio. The lead story on the news was the Red Army's counter-offensive in Russia, but three sentences at the end said that Pearl Harbor had been hit too. No further details were available yet.

### The world reacts

It was enough to be going on with. King George VI listened to the radio at Windsor Castle and was quietly pleased. So were the American fighter pilots of the RAF's Eagle Squadrons. Harold Strickland of No 71 Squadron at North Weald in Essex had opted for an early night when he learned of his country's involuntary entry into the war:

"I was reading in bed when the batman pounded on the door, entered and shouted 'Pearl Harbor has been attacked by the Japanese!' He told me that the news had just been announced by the BBC and added that most of our battleships had been destroyed. I jumped into my clothes (literally) and headed for the bar (in the officers' mess) where pandemonium was in progress."

Near Londonderry, the American pilots of No 133 Squadron headed for the mess too. One recalled that this "was the start of a bash to end all bashes – with unashamed tears running down their cheeks and patting each other on the back and buying drinks for each other". Next morning, the pilots contacted the American embassy in London and sought a transfer to the US Air Force now that their own country had joined the fight.

Winston Churchill was slower to grasp the

implications of what had happened. He was spending the weekend at Chequers, sitting glumly at dinner with Gil Winant, the US ambassador, and Averell Harriman, America's lend-lease envoy to Britain. Overwhelmed by all his war problems, Churchill nursed his head in his hands during the meal. He was silent when the butler brought in a portable radio at the end so that they could listen to the news.

The Americans' ears pricked up at the mention of Pearl Harbor, but other guests wondered if they had heard correctly. One thought it might have been the Pearl river in China that had been attacked, not Hawaii.

A phone call from the Admiralty quickly put them right. Churchill jumped up at once, his gloom forgotten, and sprang into action. Thoroughly invigorated, he spent the rest of the night dictating memos and telegrams before going to bed happier than he had been for a long time, now that the United States was in the war: "Hitler's fate was sealed. Mussolini's fate was sealed. As for the Japanese, they would be ground to powder. All the rest was merely the proper application of overwhelming force... I went to bed and slept the sleep of the saved and thankful."

Oddly enough, Hitler's reaction at his Rastenburg HQ in East Prussia was much the same as Churchill's. He too had been glum at dinner, despondent at the Wehrmacht's lack of progress on the Russian front. The Germans wanted to be in Moscow by Christmas, but the Red Army had launched a counter-offensive to stop them just as the Russian winter was beginning to bite.

Hitler was in his bunker after dinner when Otto Dietrich, his press secretary, brought him a news flash about Pearl Harbor. Like Churchill, the führer was delighted to hear it: "Hitler snatched the sheet of paper from my hand, strode out of the room and walked unaccompanied, without cap or coat, the hundred yards to the bunker of the Chief of the High Command of the Armed Forces. He was the first to bring the news there."

Field-Marshal Wilhelm Keitel never forgot the moment: "Jodl and I were both present that night as – the only time during the war – he came bursting in to us with the telegram in his hand. I gained the impression that the führer felt that the war between Japan and America had suddenly relieved him of a nightmare burden; it certainly brought us some relief from the consequences of America's undeclared state of war with us."

Hitler apparently thought the

**"Hitler's fate was sealed," declared Winston Churchill. "As for the Japanese, they would be ground to powder"**

United States would be tied up in the Pacific from then on, unable to continue supplying Britain and the Soviet Union with war materiel that was now needed elsewhere. His immediate instinct was to support his Japanese allies by declaring war on America too, even though Germany was not obliged to do so under the terms of the Tripartite Pact.

### War goes global

So it went on, through the night. Mussolini's response to the attack was the same as Hitler's: relief that the war with the USA could now be official at last. Chiang Kai-shek, already leading China's fight against Japan, was told soon after 1am, and immediately began to plan a grand military alliance in the Pacific, spearheaded by the Americans. Mao Zedong at communist headquarters and Ho Chi Minh, leading Vietnam's resistance to colonial rule from a hideout near the Chinese border, shared his thinking.

In Japan, prime minister Tojo's wife learned of Pearl Harbor from the radio, soon after breakfast. The Australians learned at the same time and suddenly remembered that their country was closer than Hawaii to Japan. The South Africans surveyed an equally undefended coastline and imposed a blackout on Cape Town for the first time in the war.

The fighting finally went global on 11 December, when Italy and Germany formally declared war on the USA. The German satellites of Finland, Hungary and Romania followed suit, declaring war on the dominions of the British empire for good measure. Cuba, Haiti, Panama, Honduras, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, El Salvador and the Dominican Republic joined their American neighbour against Japan. Four days after Frank Tremain's news flash from Hawaii, nations everywhere were at each other's throats. The whole world was at war. **H**

Nicholas Best is a former literary critic for the *Financial Times*, who has written more than 20 books, both fiction and non-fiction

### DISCOVER MORE

#### BOOKS

- **Seven Days of Infamy: Pearl Harbor Across the World** by Nicholas Best (Thomas Dunne, 2016)
- **At Dawn We Slept** by Gordon Prange (Michael Joseph, 1982)

#### ON THE PODCAST

Nicholas Best discusses the attack on Pearl Harbor on our weekly podcast, at [historyextra.com/podcasts](http://historyextra.com/podcasts)



#### 8 December 1941: The thirst for revenge grows

Young men line up at a navy recruitment station in Boston, Massachusetts in the immediate aftermath of the bombing raid. Recruitment posters later urged volunteers to "Avenge Pearl Harbor!"



#### 11 December 1941: Hitler declares war on America

Hitler, disheartened by a lack of progress on the Russian front, greets the Pearl Harbor news with delight, believing that war with Japan will divert American attention away from Germany



#### 14 December 1941: War reports flood in

A week on, and with the US now wholeheartedly part of the war in Europe, NBC's newsroom in New York frantically compiles reports of the globally escalating conflict

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INTERVIEW

# “Politicians cherry-pick from history, if they take much notice of it at all”



**Kwasi Kwarteng**

is Conservative MP for Spelthorne in Surrey. His books include *Thatcher's Trial: Six Months that Defined a Leader* (Bloomsbury, 2015)

**Peter Hennessy**

is a non-party political crossbench peer in the House of Lords and Attlee professor of contemporary British history at Queen Mary University of London

# Why do so many politicians write history books? Does a knowledge of the past help with the challenges of today? And should MPs pay more attention to history? Our reviews editor, **Matt Elton**, headed to Westminster to ask a panel of history-loving politicians

PHOTOGRAPH BY AJ LEVY

## Which came first for you, history or politics?

**Peter Hennessy:** Gossip – which links the two. Weapons-grade gossip is the link and the motivation; gossip with footnotes.

**Kwasi Kwarteng:** Very few youngsters really have a passion for politics. For me, an engagement with, and love for, history came before that. So I see history as coming before in terms of sequence of interest.

**Chris Skidmore:** I was different: I was thinking about applying to study Politics, Philosophy and Economics at Oxford, and was dissuaded by my schoolteacher who said that I'd learn more about politics if I studied the court of Henry VII.

**Tristram Hunt:** I had a passion for history first of all. I had a wonderful teacher who taught me about the battles of Bannockburn and Waterloo – but who also introduced me

to politics through history because we studied [19th-century social scientist and co-founder of Marxist theory] Friedrich Engels and his account of Victorian Manchester. So it segued from history to politics.

**PH:** My elder sister was a history school-teacher, and for Christmas 1958 she bought me RJ Unstead's *Looking at History*. It had a profound effect on me because I'm a Catholic, and I remember a wonderful drawing of the



**Tristram Hunt**  
is Labour MP for Stoke-on-Trent Central, a history broadcaster and the author of *Ten Cities that Made an Empire* (Allen Lane, 2014)

**Chris Skidmore**  
is minister for the constitution and Conservative MP for Kingswood near Bristol. His books include *Bosworth: The Birth of the Tudors* (W&N, 2014)

ecology of the monastic system in the productive and pietistic sense. It led me to want to be a monk – until puberty, when mercifully that went, but the love of history remained. That's the thing that really set me off, and then a succession of wonderful teachers, which I suspect we all have in common.

**CS:** One thing I'd like to add is that when I studied history at school and the beginning of university it was still very much an ivory-tower trade taught from textbooks. Now there has been this explosion in public history, thanks in part to things such as *BBC History Magazine*.

### What benefits do you think being a politician has for writing history?

**KK:** Being a politician helps you become a better historian, but not necessarily the other way around.

**PH:** Doesn't it give you a gyroscopic effect as a politician: a view that everything will pass, knowledge of what is transient and what isn't?

**KK:** People say that, but when I look at arguably the two most effective politicians in Britain in the past 50 years – Margaret Thatcher and Tony Blair – both were incredibly unhistorical in terms of their knowledge and approach. Thatcher had a lower-sixth version of British history in many ways; she had very passionate views, but she was not someone who ever claimed any deep historical knowledge. And I think that Blair was the same.



**“ You have to know how we got to where we are – but not load too much expectation on history as a predictor, because great perils lie there**

**PETER HENNESSY**

**TH:** That was always the Roy Jenkins' criticism of Blair: that he wasn't historical. And he meant it in an admiring way: that you don't necessarily want an executive decision-maker reflecting too deeply on all the nuances. You want someone with an almost 2D approach sometimes.

**CS:** I think, for me, that writing and doing research in the library here in Westminster, there's a constant reminder of being in this place, the geography of power. The ghost of Whitehall Palace is still reflected in the way that things operate today.

**PH:** The other thing is the human side: this place, both chambers, divide into people for whom the walls talk, who have a sense of history and ancestral voices, and those who are tone deaf to it, who would like us to be based in somewhere such as the Midlands or York. I have nothing against either of those places, but there are some of us for whom it'd be like the tearing of the flesh.

### Do you think that politicians in general take enough notice of history?

**KK:** I don't think they do.

**PH:** They cherry-pick if they do much at all.

**KK:** But actually, as Tristram said earlier, in fact in some ways there's an argument that, if you're an executive and you've got to take snap decisions, you don't want to pore over centuries of examples and different precedents. A lot of our colleagues are people who are interested in history but don't refer to it to inform their decisions.

**TH:** History is a dataset. It's like economic or social data: politicians use it to bolster, inform and develop arguments and rhetoric – and it's always been the way. What's the point of Shakespeare's history plays? Their use, from the 1600s onwards, was always about informing the present and shaping debate.

**CS:** There are two dangerous tendencies of abusing history that I see some members of parliament falling into. One is what I call the 'Churchill tendency' of looking at intervention and thinking, can I be on the right side of the argument? Can I predict, years in advance, that I can somehow be vindicated and transform my political career in some way by, say, opposing action in Syria? The second is the drive to always be on the right side of history. So when critical votes come, MPs think: "I have to be on the right side of history, not only for my constituents but so that, in 30 years' time, I'll be regarded positively."

**PH:** One must never overdo the lessons of history. I'm a Mark Twain man: "History doesn't repeat itself, but sometimes it rhymes." You have to know how we got to where we are. John Buchan, of *The Thirty-Nine Steps* fame, wrote in his memoir: "In the



**“ Arguably the two most effective politicians in Britain in the past 50 years were incredibly unhistorical in their knowledge and approach**

**KWASI KWARTENG**

cycle to which we belong, we can only see a fraction of the curve." The job of the historian, I think, is to describe that curve as travelled so far as best as we can – and not to load too much expectation on it as a predictor, because great perils lie there. Having said that, the wonderful novelist Penelope Lively wrote in her memoir that memory is "the vapour trail without which we are undone". If you fly without a sense of how we have got to where we are, you're flying, in effect, without radar.

**KK:** I think that we can overdo that. I think that you're right to say that it helps to have a sense of the past and know where you're going, but at the same time there have been remarkably effective political operators who weren't that well-versed in history: Oliver Cromwell, for instance.

### Do you have any political heroes from the historical periods you've explored?

**KK:** I think that Thatcher, who I've written a book about, was a remarkable leader. I don't follow her in every particular, but her style means that she still dominates in many ways.

**CS:** Having been involved in this lifestyle for the past five years, the common strand among the people I admire is longevity. I now have the utmost respect for key political figures in the Tudor period, which in many ways was the birth of the modern state. [Elizabeth I's chief adviser] William Cecil, for instance, constantly complained of

feeling ill and tired, and I understand now that the political system can drain you. He had a great ability to change and be on the right side of the argument, and was a master at the art of the political U-turn at the right time to make sure that he didn't bring himself down. All throughout history you can see the failures of those who are unable to negotiate the political system and whose lack of malleability meant that their heads ended up on the block.

**TH:** The young Joe Chamberlain in Birmingham was a proper progressive, an absolutely pioneering civic leader. He had a great ability to take on vested interests, to confront laissez-faire mid-Victorian economics, to deliver social justice and inspire others.

**PH:** Do you think that it's dangerous that we still think in terms of political heroes?

**TH:** That is probably what divides us politically as much as anything else. There's the Tory tradition of the power of individuals above all to dictate events, versus the socialist idea of the general melee of economic forces.

#### **Do you think that this political difference feeds into your approaches in writing history?**

**KK:** I think that it does. Both Tristram and I have written books about empire, and they were both successful, but they had very different approaches. I find that very stimulating. I learned things from Tristram's



### **“History is a dataset. Politicians use it to bolster, inform and develop arguments and rhetoric – and it's always been the way”**

**TRISTRAM HUNT**

book [*Ten Cities that Made an Empire*] and disagreed with a lot of other things, but there are lots of different approaches. Ultimately, I don't think that one can claim total exclusive possession of the truth. As Tristram says, we tend, on the right of politics, to talk of individual actors affecting outcomes, while intellectually the left is more fascinated by economic and social structures.

**CS:** The other thing is that committing to write a book takes up to five years, and you have to believe in your subject and put that effort in. I don't doubt for a moment that writing about economic history or agrarian history is valuable, but I couldn't commit myself to focusing on a book because that's not where my heart lies. And that political attitude in a way informs that.

**TH:** The risk for us, as historians working in Westminster, is that you are more and more drawn to the importance of individual conversations in affecting results. What you learn working here is that individual relationships matter enormously in political outcomes, but the danger for us as historians is that those broader economic, social and intellectual contexts can sometimes be lost.

#### **Are there any misconceptions about the relationship between politics and history? And are there any pitfalls?**

**PH:** The one thing that's struck me since coming into the House of Lords six years ago is just how great the gap is in terms of public

understanding of the way parliament works. Many people, unfortunately, have a parody view of parliamentarians, particularly MPs, garnered from watching Prime Minister's Questions and from the expenses scandal and all of the rest of it. They don't realise that if you prick MPs they bleed like anyone else, and that most people in both houses of parliament are very highly motivated with a strong public service charge. They're hugely decent people who work their socks off, with a constituency load that never gets any easier – I don't know how these guys manage to get any scholarship done at all.

There's a lot of what [English writer and critic] William Hazlitt described in the 1820s as “the pleasure of hating”. The country is looking for things to fall out over, and often the number one target are the people here in Westminster. And I find that a great pity because it's downright inaccurate – and being vilified doesn't help on wet Mondays in February when you have all your duties to do.

**KK:** A recent phenomenon is that some people now think of MPs as civil servants rather than private people. So you occasionally get people asking “But why are you writing books?” The fact is that MPs have been writing books since Thomas More and probably before that, for hundreds of years. So when people talk about the new phenomenon of the historian MP, it makes you want to ask: have you not heard of Edward Gibbon or Thomas Macaulay or Thomas More or Winston Churchill?

**TH:** One of the things that I've discovered is that being a historian is very informative and useful for my work in the constituency. Stoke-on-Trent is a place with a remarkable history in the industrial and design revolutions, and it's a place that has been hammered in the past 30 years by world historic changes. So having a sense and understanding of time and one's position within it is useful. But it's also useful to have the credentials as a historian to say: “The architecture and heritage and industry we have here is important – let's make more of it.” As history becomes heritage and heritage becomes an asset, being a historian is quite a valuable part of doing your job as an MP. 



### **“I now have the utmost respect for key political figures in the Tudor period, which in many ways was the birth of the modern state”**

**CHRIS SKIDMORE**

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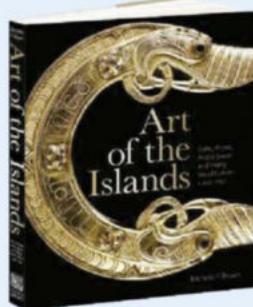
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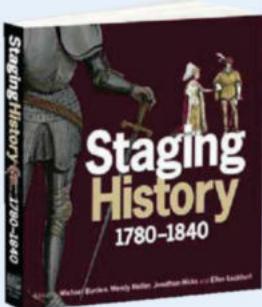
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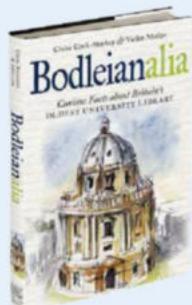


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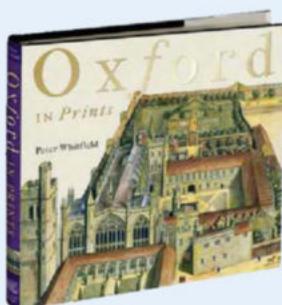


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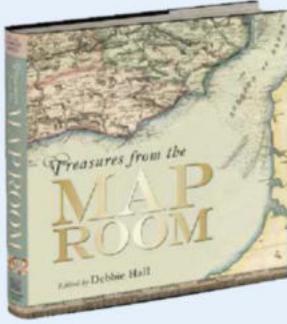
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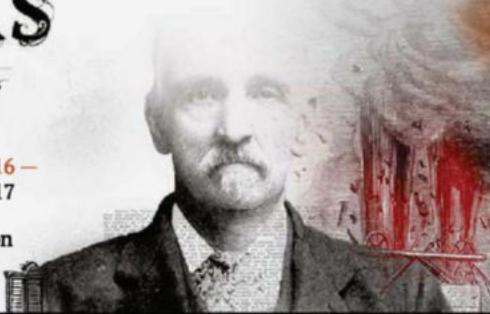
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# Books of the year 2016

On the following pages, experts highlight the best history books of 2016 - ranging from classical Greece to 16th-century queens and the wars of the 20th century. Plus, our pick of the best historical fiction, TV and film

## BOOKS OF THE YEAR 2016

## Another packed year

As our overstuffed shelves will attest, more history books than you could ever reasonably tackle are written each year – and 2016 has been no exception. How, then, to make sense of it all? Which books should you spend your valuable time and money investigating?

Over the following pages, you'll find the answer. We asked leading experts to choose the titles that most stood out in their field this year, in areas as diverse as the ancient world, the 20th century and the vast expanse of global history. And that's not all: we also have authors offering their personal takes on the best historical fiction and TV of the past 12 months.

The result is an eclectic mix, which will hopefully offer inspiration whatever your interests. I hope that you enjoy it.

**Matt Elton**

Reviews editor



## ANCIENT WORLD

## Wars and words

**PETER JONES** selects his favourite new books on the distant past, from war and peace through to the roots of language



Adrian Goldsworthy is on top form with his **Pax Romana: War, Peace and Conquest in the Roman World** (Weidenfeld & Nicolson).

Pointing out that war was virtually endemic in the ancient world, he explains clearly and persuasively how Rome was able to maintain the peace for such a long period.



How did an ancient Greek learn Latin? In **Learning Latin the Ancient Way** (Cambridge University Press), Eleanor Dickey lifts the curtain on the famous language teacher Dositheus and his imitators. It is the holiday-phrasebook stories that are so fascinating (going to school;



shopping; at the baths) – all Latin translated.

From life to death, war to peace, power to prostitutes, aliens to apes, beards to bribes, lovers to lawyers and education to equality, you'll find it all in more than 20,000 entries in **A Dictionary of Classical Greek Quotations** edited by Marinos

Yeroulanos (IB Tauris). The quotes are listed alphabetically by author, in Greek and translation, with the topic index in English. A tremendous bargain.



**In the Land of a Thousand Gods: A History of Asia Minor in the Ancient World**

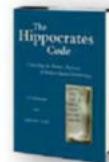
by Christian Marek, with Peter Frei (Princeton),

resembles a narrative encyclopedia. The Hittites were that region's sole indigenous rulers. From then on, Persians, Greeks and Romans controlled it. Marek's history covers every aspect of this extraordinary world in the "first historical overview of Anatolia as a bridge and a melting pot".

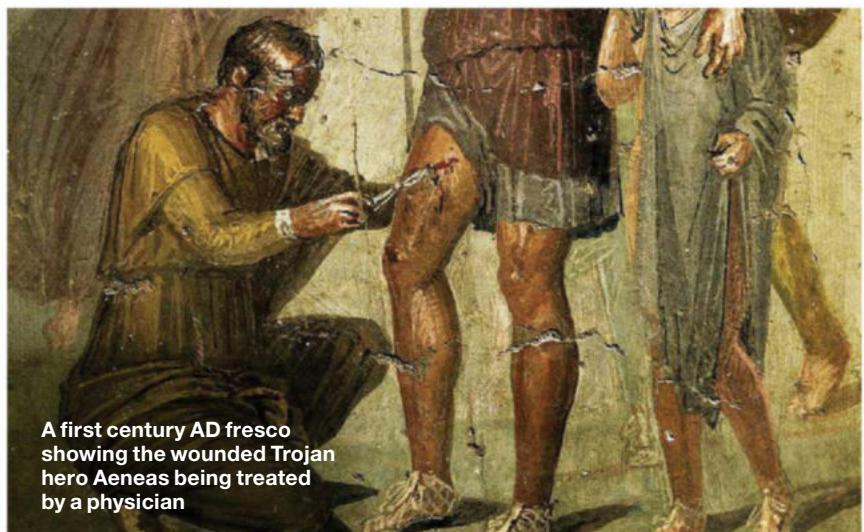
**The Hippocrates Code**

by JC McKeown and Joshua Smith

(Hackett) introduces the Greek roots of medical terminology in the context of ancient medical practice, and the book is superbly illustrated.



**Peter Jones** is the author of *Quid Pro Quo: What the Romans Really Gave the English Language* (Atlantic, 2016)



A first century AD fresco showing the wounded Trojan hero Aeneas being treated by a physician

Ronald Reagan rose above his film star background to become US president. Here he is shown making a speech in 1988



#### 20TH CENTURY

**The Hollywood actor defied his critics' predictions to end up as a Cold War winner**



For students of British political history, 2016 will surely go down as one of the great landmark years, joining the likes of 1968 in the popular imagination. So it was appropriate that this year opened with Simon Hall's terrific

**1956: The World in Revolt** (Faber), a spirited, panoramic look back at the dramatic events that convulsed the world 60 years ago, such as the

Hungarian uprising, the rise of Fidel Castro and Suez.

Among other fine global histories of fraught 20th-century moments, I enjoyed Robert Gerwarth's **The Vanquished: Why the First World War Failed to End, 1917-**

**1923** (Allen Lane). It explores the toxic legacy of the conflict in the early 1920s, its narrative sweeping from the newly emerged Baltic States to the ruins of the Ottoman empire.

This year, as so often happens, politicians loomed very large. If you thought there was nothing fresh to say about Winston Churchill, then look at Kevin Ruane's tremendously assured **Churchill and the Bomb in War and Cold War** (Bloomsbury), which has

new things to say both about the great man himself and about the diplomatic climate of the 1940s.



If you've been following the US presidential election, you should enjoy Iwan Morgan's magnificent **Reagan: American Icon** (IB Tauris). It paints an insightful portrait of the Hollywood actor who defied his critics' predictions to end up as a Cold War winner.

Finally, two titles not technically history books but packed with historical insight. Peter Parker's **Housman Country: Into the Heart of England** (Little, Brown) is a brilliant book about the cult of the poet's *A Shropshire Lad*, and a portrait of early 20th-century British culture, ranging from classical music to Stanley Baldwin's speeches.



Jonathan Wilson's **Angels with Dirty Faces: The Footballing History of Argentina** (Orion) is an entertaining, superbly researched read, with plenty to say not just about Diego Maradona, but about the history of a nation that has struggled to live up to its founding ideals as South America's promised land.



Dominic Sandbrook is author of *The Great British Dream Factory* (Allen Lane, 2015)

## BOOKS OF THE YEAR 2016

## Best of the rest

**Sarah Gristwood**

John Guy's special gift is to combine groundbreaking archival research, which offers genuinely new insights into the seemingly familiar Tudor period, with a magically vivid and accessible writing style. His latest book, *Elizabeth: The Forgotten Years* (Viking), explores the last two decades of Elizabeth I's reign. Guy paints a portrait of a flawed and complex queen in a time of profound national uncertainty.

**Sarah Gristwood**  
is author of *Game of Queens: The Women Who Made 16th-century Europe* (OneWorld, 2016)

**Lucy Worsley**

Caroline Shenton's *Mr Barry's War* (Oxford University Press) is a real jewel, finely wrought and beautiful, just like the Palace of Westminster that it describes. It's the story of quite a bonkers project, with the architect Charles Barry and his collaborator Augustus Pugin facing immense challenges to get anything done, let alone to create one of the most recognisable buildings in the world.

**Lucy Worsley**  
is a television presenter and chief curator at Historic Royal Palaces

## SOCIAL HISTORY

**The body politic**

**JOANNA BOURKE** looks at the best history books of 2016 that put people at centre stage



This has been a year of 'big books'. Richard J. Evans's **The Pursuit of Power: Europe 1815-1914** (Allen Lane) is a monumental achievement. It is a wide-ranging, transnational, political, economic, military, social, and cultural history of a complex continent that dominated the globe. Power in all its forms is Evans's central theme, including the tensions between emancipatory revolutions and tyrannical regimes. However, he never forgets the individual: a French socialist-feminist trapped in an unhappy marriage, a bookish Austro-Hungarian countess, and a British suffragette are just a few of the people he breathes life into. I was captivated throughout all 819 pages.



Equally magisterial is Frank Trentmann's **Empire of Things: How We Became a World of Consumers, from the Fifteenth Century to the Twenty-First** (Allen Lane). Consumption is more than purchasing 'things': it is also about meaning and power. Trentmann convincingly shows how a historical perspective can contribute not only to our understanding of how we got to this point in the history of consumption, but also how we might respond productively to some of the challenges we face. It is a global history; he needed every one of the 862 pages.

A sketch by Michelangelo in preparation for painting the Sistine Chapel's ceiling

**She answers the 'so what' question, powerfully demonstrating why the history of the body matters**



Meanwhile, Alain Corbin, Jean-Jacques Courtine and Georges Vigarello's edited volume **A History of Virility** (Columbia University Press) is a 'mere' 744 pages long. This book sets out to trace the story of an elusive concept – virility – from ancient times to the present. Translated by Keith Cohen, it is a global history of the phallus, power, authority, sexual prowess, bodily shape, performance and masculinity. Thankfully, the authors, an international group of scholars, refrain from double entendre. This is both serious and mesmerising history.



Finally, I turn to a very different history of the body: Fay Bound Alberti's **This Mortal Coil: The Human Body in History and Culture** (OUP). In contrast to the other three books, this is slight in weight (at 289 pages), but not in intellectual breadth. Alberti gives us a new history of the body, primarily the female one. Crucially, she answers the 'so what' question, powerfully demonstrating why the history of the body matters.

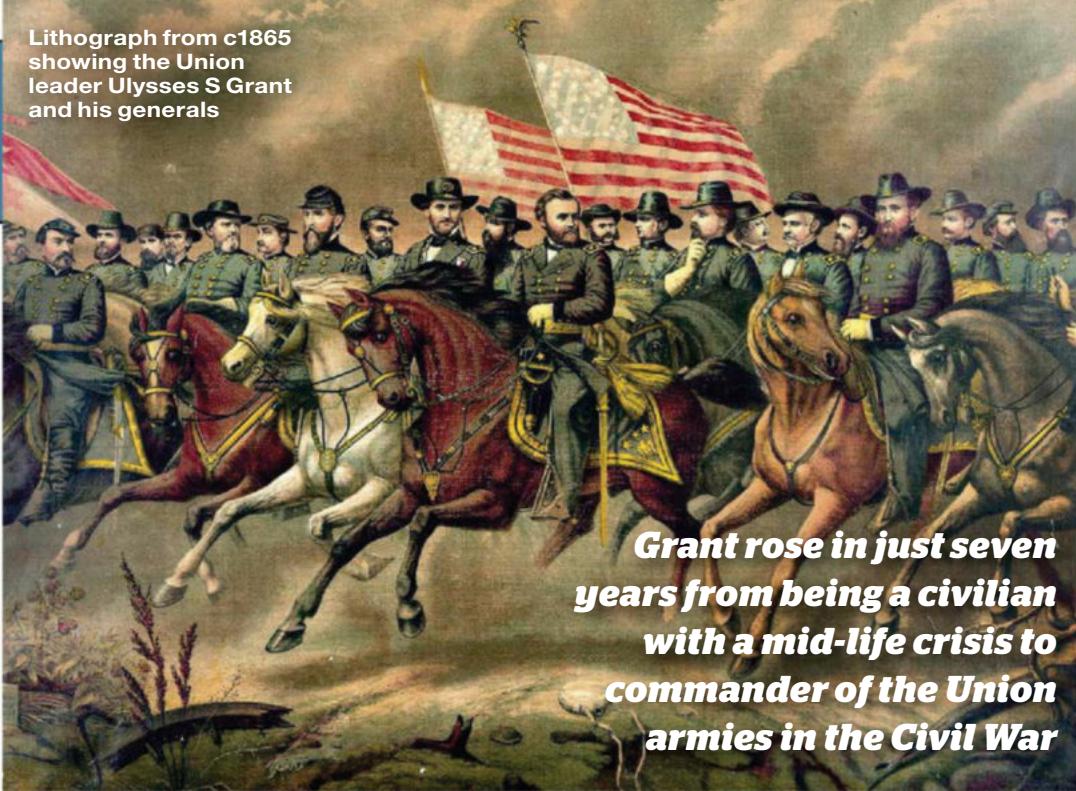


**Joanna Bourke** is the author of *Fear: A Cultural History* (Virago), and is professor of history at Birkbeck College

BRIDGEMAN



Lithograph from c1865 showing the Union leader Ulysses S Grant and his generals



**Grant rose in just seven years from being a civilian with a mid-life crisis to commander of the Union armies in the Civil War**

MILITARY

## War stories

**ALEXANDER WATSON** singles out some of this year's military history titles, from battle narratives to biographies



There have been a lot of great military histories out this year. My favourite soldier biography is Ronald C White's monumental **American Ulysses: A Life of Ulysses S Grant** (Presidio Press). At 800-plus pages, this is no light read, but the writing is delightful and the story of how Grant rose in just seven years from being a civilian with a mid-life crisis to commander of the Union armies during the American Civil War, and then US president, is compelling.

For those who like their history broad and quirky, Lukasz Kamienski's **Shooting Up: A Short History of Drugs and War** (OUP) is well worth a look. He argues warfare can only be understood with a knowledge of what narcotics soldiers take, and uncovers a surfeit of binge drinking and pill popping. From drunk Greek hoplites to substance-abusing child soldiers, he reveals a little-known side of war.

The Second World War continues to dominate publishers' lists, and two particularly fine books appeared this year. Daniel Todman's **Britain's War: Into Battle, 1937-1941** (Allen Lane) is the impressively erudite and readable first book in a two-volume history. He offers a genuinely



new interpretation of how Britain fought and was transformed by the struggle. Blending grand strategy, events in the empire, military action and experiences on the home front, this will be a defining account for years to come.

James Holland's **Burma '44: The Battle that Turned Britain's War in the East** (Bantam) is a smashing battle history of the uninspiring sounding, but important, Defence of the Admin Box. The fear and tension of jungle combat are tangible in this pacey narrative of how British and Indian troops won their first decisive victory over the Japanese.

Lastly, (published very late in 2015), I strongly recommend Tim Judah's **In Wartime: Stories from Ukraine** (Allen Lane). Based on his reportage in 2014-15, this moving book is essential to understanding the conflict. It is a powerful reminder of why good military history is important: Judah shows how Ukraine's past has been weaponised, with violence fuelled by divided memory and deliberate misinterpretation of the last century's bloody conflicts.



Alexander Watson is the author of *Ring of Steel: Germany and Austria-Hungary at War, 1914-1918* (Allen Lane, 2014)

## Best of the rest

### Nigel Jones

The best book to come my way this year was *Deborah and the War of the Tanks 1917* (Pen & Sword). This is an impressive debut by John Taylor. A single British tank, buried after the battle of Cambrai in 1917 and later rediscovered, is a treasure of First World War archaeology. Taylor skilfully and readably ties the tale of the tank and its crew to the wider birth of armoured warfare. He makes startling historical discoveries en route. **Nigel Jones** is a historian, journalist and biographer

### Roger Moorhouse

My stand-out book of 2016 is Volker Ullrich's brilliant biography *Hitler: Ascent 1889-1936* (Bodley Head). This is an eye-opening and enlightening re-examination of the life of the German dictator, which incorporates personal aspects and anecdotal evidence that his earlier biographers considered to be politically irrelevant. As well written as it is informative, this moves the debate on Hitler to a new level. **Roger Moorhouse's books include The Devil's Alliance: Hitler's Pact with Stalin** (Bodley Head, 2014)



## BOOKS OF THE YEAR 2016

## Best of the rest

**Simon Sebag Montefiore**

Daniel Beer's 2016 book *House of the Dead: Siberian Exile under the Tsars* (Allen Lane) is masterful, gripping and deeply researched. It's filled with astonishing, vivid and heart-breaking stories of crime and punishment, of redemption, love and terrifying violence. It has an amazing cast of despots, murderers, whores and heroes, and takes place in godforsaken mines, Arctic villages and beautiful taiga. It's a wonderful read.

**Simon Sebag Montefiore** is the author of several books including *The Romanovs 1613–1918* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2016)

**George Goodwin**

Jerry White's *Mansions of Misery: A Biography of the Marshalsea Debtors' Prison* (Bodley Head) is a factual portrait of desperate and roguish Londoners that is as startling as anything in Dickens. Its wealth of anecdote and sympathetic style, spiced with witty observation, makes this the very opposite of a miserable read.

**George Goodwin** is a historian and author of *Benjamin Franklin in London* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2016)

## TUDOR AND MEDIEVAL

**Royal revelations**

**TRACY BORMAN** rates the year's best works exploring the medieval and Tudor periods

One of the greatest thrills of historical research is delving through original manuscripts written by and about the people and events in question. But so often these same manuscripts are relegated to the footnotes of even the most scholarly works. *Meetings with Remarkable Manuscripts* (Allen Lane),

Christopher de Hamel's brilliant book, restores them to their rightful place in the sun. It explores 12 of the most famous manuscripts in existence and reveals what they tell us about almost a thousand years of medieval history.

Sarah Gristwood's *Game of Queens: The Women Who Made 16th-Century Europe* (Oneworld) is an engaging and highly readable book telling the interweaving stories of an extraordinary group of women whose struggles for power left an indelible mark on 16th-century Europe. This was an age when women were viewed as second-class citizens and the notion of female rule was 'monstrous'. Yet, as Gristwood convincingly proves, these queens played far more than just a supporting role.

Its perfect companion is the scholarly and entertaining *Four Princes* (John Murray) by John Julius Norwich. Subtitled 'Henry VIII, Francis I, Charles V, Suleiman the Magnificent and the Obsessions that Forged Modern Europe', it is an account of four men who dominated their era. The book provides a vivid and compelling picture of this turbulent century, when Renaissance and Reformation were the backdrop to an obsessive rivalry that would have dramatic and, at times, disastrous consequences.



Catherine Fletcher's **The Black Prince of Florence: The Spectacular Life and Treacherous World of Alessandro de' Medici** (Bodley Head) is a brilliantly written and impeccably researched biography.

The story of Alessandro's brief and bloody ascendancy reveals the darker side of this most dazzling and cultured of cities, beset by intrigue, violence and betrayal. Not to be missed.

Another stunning biography is Nicola Tallis's **Crown of Blood: The Deadly Inheritance of Lady Jane Grey** (Michael O'Mara), which throws new light on the dramatic life of one of the most tragic figures in history. Lady Jane Grey was executed for treason at the age of just 17. Her only crime was her royal blood – irresistible to ambitious relatives who plotted to usurp the Tudor succession and place her on the throne. Drawing on new research, Tallis presents Jane as complex, intelligent, charismatic, radical and, ultimately, courageous.

Tracy Borman's books include *The Private Lives of the Tudors* (Hodder & Stoughton, 2016)



**It's the story of women who left an indelible mark on 16th-century Europe**

Elizabeth I is one of the stars of Sarah Gristwood's book on the 16th-century's most powerful women

Atlas bore the weight of the heavens on his shoulders, as seen in a copy of an ancient Greek original

## GLOBAL HISTORY

## All heaven and earth

**PANKAJ MISHRA** selects books that take a wider view of history

One of 2016's most astonishing developments was the rapid fragmentation of national narratives and proliferation of sub-nationalisms, from Scotland to Hong Kong.

National founding myths faced strong challenges from minorities at the same time that hardliners vended souped-up fables of ancestral origins. The impact of such turmoil on conventional national histories is undeniable. The necessity for a global history has never been more urgent.

Its scope is still being defined, however, and many issues have yet to be settled. I can't think of a more useful guide to them than Sebastian Conrad's **What is Global History?** (Princeton). This short, stimulating book sets out the challenges facing historians more used to working within the boundaries of an individual nation-state.

With its account of a worldwide obliteration of imperial records, Ian Cobain's **The History Thieves**

(Portobello Books) reveals how much skulduggery has gone into feel-good notions about the British empire. Archives that could have illuminated the violence and racism of modern imperialism were systematically destroyed or hidden, creating space for fantasies of imperial benevolence and splendid isolation that are still central in British society.

Global history will remain an academic exercise if it does not dismantle present-day modes of thought. South Asia today is roiled by Hindu fanatics demanding emancipation from centuries of Muslim 'slavery', and Islamic fundamentalists insisting on their superiority over Hindu 'weaklings'. In this version of history, Hindus and Muslims were locked into mutual hostility from the eighth century



onwards by some exceptionally brutal invaders of India from the west. Closely reading a 13th-century

text, and locating its Persian provenance, Manan Ahmed Asif gives a very different picture of the arrival of Islam in India in **A Book of Conquest** (Harvard).

Tonio Andrade offers fresh insights into the perennially interesting 'great divergence' between Europe and Asia in **The Gunpowder Age** (Princeton). Part of a larger ongoing assessment of China's strengths and weaknesses before its 'century of humiliation' by western powers, it makes us appreciate the complex factors behind the emergence of Chinese military and economic power.



Pankaj Mishra is a writer whose books include *From the Ruins of Empire* (Allen Lane, 2012) and *Age of Anger* (Allen Lane, 2017)

**The necessity for a global history has never been more urgent**



## BOOKS OF THE YEAR 2016



## Best of the rest

**Andrew Roberts**

William T Johnson's *The Origins of the Grand Alliance* (University Press of Kentucky) charts the progress of the Anglo-American military entente from 1937 to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941. Revealing how closely staff officers collaborated in anticipation of the US entering the Second World War, it's a fine work of scholarship that is well written, well researched and eye-opening.

**Andrew Roberts** is visiting professor in the department of war studies, King's College London

**Yasmin Khan**

Jon Wilson's *India Conquered* (Simon & Schuster) brings histories of the Raj up to date. It covers the sweep of British engagement with India, from trade in the 17th century to independence in the 20th. Wilson masters the big picture and brings new interpretations to the more familiar episodes. It's a clear-eyed, unsentimental story about the driving forces behind imperial rule.

**Yasmin Khan** is an associate professor at the University of Oxford and author of *The Raj at War: A People's History of India's Second World War* (Vintage, 2016)

## HISTORICAL FICTION

**Riveting reads**

**IMOGEN ROBERTSON** nominates her favourites from this year's bumper crop of gripping historical fiction

It's heartening to see that 2016 has offered up a flow of excellent new works from established writers and a slew of vigorous and thoughtful debuts.

My choices are highlights from an impressive field.

**The Ornatrix** by Kate Howard (Duckworth) is my pick of the debuts. Howard luxuriates in the physicality of her 16th-century Italian setting and the poisonous quest for beauty in this sensual, earthy novel. Shot through with seams of gothic darkness, it continually absorbs, seduces and surprises.

Robyn Young, author of the bestselling Brethren Trilogy, embarks on her New World Rising series with the riveting **Sons of the Blood** (Hodder & Stoughton). Turning her talents for epic adventure and rich historical detailing to the Wars of the Roses, Young's charging narrative follows the trials of a young man entrusted with a world-changing secret in dangerous times.

The current appetite for Wars of the Roses fiction has also been sharpened and satisfied this year by the third in Toby Clements's Kingmaker series, **Divided Souls** (Century). Providing a ground up



**Providing a ground up view of the conflict, the novel is another earthy, bloody, tour de force**

A battle scene from the Wars of the Roses, which is the subject of *Divided Souls* by Toby Clements

view of the conflict, the novel is another earthy, bloody, tour de force.

A dark jewel of historical crime, **The Black Friar** by SG MacLean (Quercus) is the second novel about Damian Seeker, captain of Cromwell's guard. He is a compelling anti-hero and the mysteries he is faced with, beginning with a body found bricked up in the ruins of Blackfriars, are satisfactorily complex. MacLean recreates Protectorate London with authority, rendering the world of conspiracies, rebellion and the ever-present possibility of violence gripping and convincing.

William Ryan's 1930s Stalinist-era crime novels have won him an enthusiastic readership. This year he shifts focus to the close of the Second World War, with **The Constant Soldier** (Mantle). In this tense and subtle thriller, the central character returns from the horrors of the eastern front badly wounded to find himself living in the shadow of a luxurious SS retreat. It's a masterpiece of empathetic imagination and storytelling flair. ■



**Imogen Robertson** is chair of the Historical Writers Association. Her books include *The Paris Winter* (Headline, 2013)



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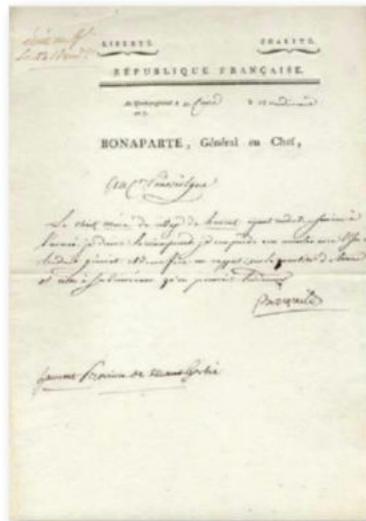
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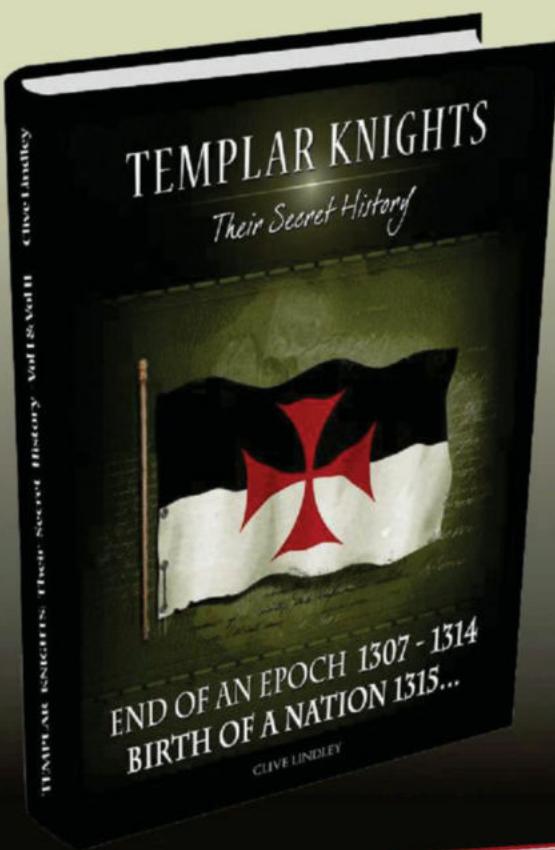


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## WHATEVER HAPPENED TO THE KNIGHTS TEMPLAR?

Seven centuries after they were formally closed down, after years of torture and the burning alive of their leaders and captive knights on absurd charges, the many survivors and 'what happened next' still constitute one of European history's longest lasting mysteries.

In 1314, seven years after the shock arrests in France the leading characters: Pope; King and Templar Grand Master were all dead. Less than half of the Templar personnel, located all over the map of Christendom were ever accounted for. Their treasure, international banking and trading operations were out of reach of those that had conspired to destroy them.

Some believe that the Templars remain in being even today.  
**So what did happen?**

*Templar Knights: their Secret History* takes the story from the arrests of Black Friday 13th October 1307, to include the surviving Templars fighting for Scotland and for Switzerland in their wars of Independence, years after the Order was formally terminated.

For more information go to [www.templarsecrethistory.com](http://www.templarsecrethistory.com)  
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# TV OF THE YEAR



The popular BBC crime drama *Ripper Street* explores the mean streets of late Victorian London

## Murders and musicals

**FERN RIDDELL** describes some of her highlights of this year's historical viewing, from broadcast TV to home media

There's been so much to enjoy on television this year, especially as 2016 saw the triumphant return of the BBC's *Ripper Street*, back again for a fourth season. I've been one of the show's historical consultants since season three, and it has been a privilege to be part of this gothic crime drama.

With a huge commitment to getting authentic, untold history into its storylines, *Ripper Street* constantly challenges the audience's perception of the past. Featuring exceptional writing from Richard Warlow and Toby Finlay, and fantastic performances from Matthew Macfadyen, Jerome Flynn, Adam Rothenburg and MyAnna Buring, no other 19th-century drama showcases the reality of late Victorian London.

Levison Wood's *Walking the Himalayas* on Channel 4 was part history, part cultural commentary, and definitely all adventure. The explorer set out to walk the length of the world's highest mountain range, from Afghanistan to Bhutan. Wood's passion for the places he encountered lights up the screen.

Currently airing in both the US and the UK on Sky, the series *Westworld* is an outstanding take on our need to escape into history. Set in a recreated American Wild West theme park, where all the characters are robots and the humans are tourists living out their history-based fantasies, *Westworld*

makes us question not only our fascination with the past, but also whether it is where we have left our humanity.

The delicately crafted *Regarding Susan Sontag*, which has been doing the rounds of film festivals for the last two years, is finally available on DVD. It is essential viewing for anyone interested in the life of this influential critic who died in 2004.

Set in 1920s Australia, *Miss Fisher's Murder Mysteries*, available via Netflix, has been one of my favourite discoveries of this year. Based on Kerry Greenwood's books, Miss Fisher is a glamorous lady detective, solving crimes and catching murderers while slowly seducing her stoic police inspector Jack Robinson. It's a lot of fun, and perfect for binge watching on grey autumn days.

Honourable mention goes to *Galavant*, a hilarious medieval musical cut short in its prime by cancellation (now online at ABC America). There's huge fan support for this series, which saw notable guest stars including Hugh Bonneville as a pirate captain, Simon Callow as a fortune teller, and Kylie Minogue as a fairy queen who owns a gay bar. ■

***Ripper Street* constantly challenges the audience's perception of the past**



Actor Essie Davis as Miss Fisher in the eponymous Australian TV drama



Fern Riddell is a cultural historian specialising in entertainment, sex and the suffragettes. She is the author of *A Victorian Guide to Sex* (Pen & Sword, 2014)

FROM THE MAKERS OF

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## Itinerary

### Day One

#### Morning: Depart UK

Meet in London and travel to Dover for our ferry crossing to Calais and coach journey to Ypres.

#### Afternoon: Flanders Fields and the Menin Gate

Following a visit to Flanders Fields, we return to our hotel for a drinks reception and dinner. After dinner, we walk to the Menin Gate to hear the town's fire brigade sound the *Last Post* in tribute to those who died here.

### Day Two

#### Morning: Lectures at the Cloth Hall

*BBC History Magazine* presents three lectures given by historians.

#### Afternoon: Battlefield tour of western front sites

Travel to Essex Farm cemetery, where Dr John McCrae, author of the poem *In Flanders Fields*, treated the wounded. We then visit Langemark German war cemetery, scene of the first gas attacks by the German army, followed by a trip to Tyne Cot cemetery, the largest cemetery on the western front.

### Day Three

#### Morning: Lectures at the Cloth Hall

*BBC History Magazine* presents three lectures given by historians.

#### Afternoon: Talbot House and return

Visit Talbot House, Poperinge, which provided rest and relaxation to thousands of British soldiers between 1915 and 1918. Board the ferry for our return home.

### Lecturers

**Nigel Jones** is a co-founder of Historical Trips and author of many works of 20th-century history, including *The War Walk: A Journey Along the Western Front* (2004).

**Spencer Jones** is an award-winning author and historian. His book *Courage Without Glory: The British Army on the Western Front 1915* (2015) was shortlisted for the 2016 British Army Book of the Year award.

**Nick Lloyd** is reader in military and imperial history at King's College London and author of a number of books, including *Hundred Days: The End of the Great War* (2013).

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Ahmed Bouchiki,  
a Moroccan waiter  
killed by Mossad  
agents in 1973



## Mistaken identity

### One Night in Lillehammer

Radio Radio 4

scheduled for Tuesday 13 December

In July 1973, Mossad agents gunned down Moroccan waiter Ahmed Bouchiki in the quiet Norwegian town of Lillehammer, mistakenly believing him to be a mastermind of the massacre of Israeli athletes at the 1972 Munich Olympics. Hugh Costello's new drama explores the aftermath of the killing, when Mossad operatives were prevented from leaving Norway. An innocent man was murdered but also, importantly in historical terms, this was a key moment in what would subsequently become known as the war on terror, and a huge blow to Mossad's prestige.



An artist's impression of the wreck of *Britannic* on the seabed off Greece

## Buried at sea

### Titanic's Tragic Twin: The Britannic Disaster

TV BBC Two

scheduled for December

While the sinking of the *Titanic* has passed into folklore, the loss of her sister ship, *Britannic*, is far less well remembered. In November 1916, the liner, being used as a hospital ship, sank after hitting a mine in the Aegean. A century on, Kate Humble and Andy Torbet look back at those events. Humble meets descendants of those involved – 1,035 of the 1,065 souls on board were rescued, including Violet 'Miss Unsinkable' Jessops who also survived the sinking of the *Titanic* – while Torbet dives down to the wreck.

Jonathan Wright previews the pick of upcoming programmes

# TV & RADIO

## In the bleak midwinter...

Food historian Annie Gray explains how our 19th-century forebears reinvented Christmas for a new urban age

### Victorian Bakers at Christmas

TV BBC Two scheduled for December

Between the 1830s and 1870s – not much longer than a generation – Christmas was reinvented. Unlike the riotous festivities of earlier eras, the Victorians, in the words of food historian Annie Gray, created a celebration that was "family-friendly, hospitable... and charitable".

Though the change was driven in part by Victoria and Albert's "overt emphasis" on the nuclear family, this was also a celebration in keeping with the demands of a rapidly industrialising society. "A new focus only on Christmas Day was evident," says Gray. "Already the 12 days [when farm workers downed tools] were no more, but now in an urban economy where people didn't get paid on days off even Twelfth Night disappeared as a major feast day. Elements such as present-giving, previously associated with new year, were shoehorned into one day."

Still, as Gray, co-presenter Alex Langlands and a quartet of professional bakers explore in a one-off *Victorian Bakers* special, there were also gains. We owe "cards, crackers, flaming pudding, the Christmas post and the popularisation of

the Christmas tree" to this era.

"There was a great deal of false nostalgia [among later Victorians] about some mythical past in which everyone lived next door to everyone else, and all doors were flung open to the poor and needy. In reality, however, Christmas at the dawn of the Victorian era was a shadow of its previous self."

This new emphasis on a single day meant that many winter dishes became "rebranded as Christmas foods". Twelfth cakes, associated with the final day of festivities, gave way to Christmas cakes, and other recipes also changed. For instance, the amount of meat in mince pies dwindled, though for much of the 19th century the rich ate pies containing roast beef or neat's (calf's) tongue, while the poor had to make do with cheaper cuts or even tripe (stomach lining).

"Although our modern bakers weren't used to handling it, and it is alarming to the uninitiated, tripe cooks out in the mix and you don't notice the texture when it's eaten," says Gray. "The meat in all cases gives a depth of flavour – and a level of nutrition – which is lovely, and I much prefer Victorian mincemeat to the modern, rather insipid stuff." ■

Four master bakers tackle Victorian recipes in a new one-off programme about Christmas specialities

**"In the new urban economy  
Twelfth Night disappeared  
as a major feast day"**



David Lloyd George's young daughter Megan pins up a poster of her father at budget time in 1910. Long revered, his career became mired in scandal



## Political giant

**Dan Snow on Lloyd George**

**TV** BBC One Wales and BBC Four  
scheduled for December

In 1918, Liberal prime minister David Lloyd George was lauded as the man who won the war. It was an accolade he had earned not just from his time as PM but for his service as chancellor, munitions minister and secretary of state for war, transforming an initially underprepared country into a war machine.

By October 1922, though, Lloyd George had been booted out of office by former Conservative allies, his name mired in scandal when it became known he had sold honours in return

for hard cash. The man who did so much to shape the postwar world never returned to the front bench.

For the centenary of Lloyd George's appointment as PM, his great-great grandson, historian Dan Snow, profiles his famous ancestor in a documentary that tries to unravel the contradictions in the life of a man who, as a Welsh solicitor rather than an establishment figure, connected easily with ordinary people but fell out with senior military staff at key moments.

Snow also explores Lloyd George's relationship with his private secretary, Frances Stevenson. Some 25 years his junior, she was also his mistress, and their marriage in later years caused a schism in Lloyd George's family.

## Rediscovered gems

### Pioneers of African-American Cinema

**DVD** (BFI, £49.99)

So-called 'race films', made outside the Hollywood system by entrepreneurial African-Americans for African-Americans, offer a parallel social history of the US. Production ceased around the early 1950s and for many years they were largely forgotten. Then, in the 1980s, the films began to be shown by Black Entertainment Television, and rediscovery began in earnest. Last year arthouse distributor Kino Lorber launched a Kickstarter campaign to raise more than

\$50,000 to release a remastered collection of rarely seen films by the likes of Oscar Micheaux, Spencer Williams, Zara Neale Hurston and James and Eloyce Gist.

Now the BFI is giving the films a UK release – accompanied by new music from DJ Spooky, Max Roach, Samuel Waymon, Donald Sosin and more – as part of its BFI Black Star project celebrating "the range, versatility and power of black actors". Much care and attention has been lavished on the packaging and presentation, which includes an 80-page booklet.

Most of all, though, it's the films themselves that linger in the mind, reminders that those whose voices aren't heard loudly enough often have the most to say.



Paul Robeson stars in the 1925 'race film' *Body and Soul*

## ALSO LOOK OUT FOR...



Chloe Pirrie, Charlie Murphy and Finn Atkins play the Brontë sisters

The story of the Brontë family – Charlotte, Emily, Anne and their reckless, brilliant brother Branwell – has enthralled successive generations. New feature-length drama **To Walk Invisible: The Brontë Sisters** (BBC One, December), written and directed by Sally Wainwright (*Happy Valley*), looks at the family's internal dynamics. A starry cast includes Jonathan Pryce (*Wolf Hall*) as the siblings' father, Patrick.

Also on BBC One, look out for the **Call the Midwife** Christmas special (December). For those who want to binge on alternate history, series two of **The Man in the High Castle** will be available via Amazon Prime Video from 16 December.

For **Henry VIII's Six Wives** (BBC Two, Wednesday 7 December), Lucy Worsley explores key moments in the lives of Catherine of Aragon and her queenly successors. (See our feature on page 50 for more.)

Radio highlights include **Drama on 3: Autumn Journal** (Radio 3, Sunday 4 December), in which Colin Morgan reads Louis MacNeice's poetic take on life in 1938, written against the backdrop of the Munich Agreement and the fall of Barcelona. And **Sunday Feature: David Attenborough - World Music Collector** (Radio 3, Christmas Day) reveals how the naturalist's early career was inspired by working with song collector Alan Lomax.

Yesterday's highlights include a UK premiere for **After Hitler** (Sunday 4 December), exploring world events immediately following Nazi Germany's defeat.

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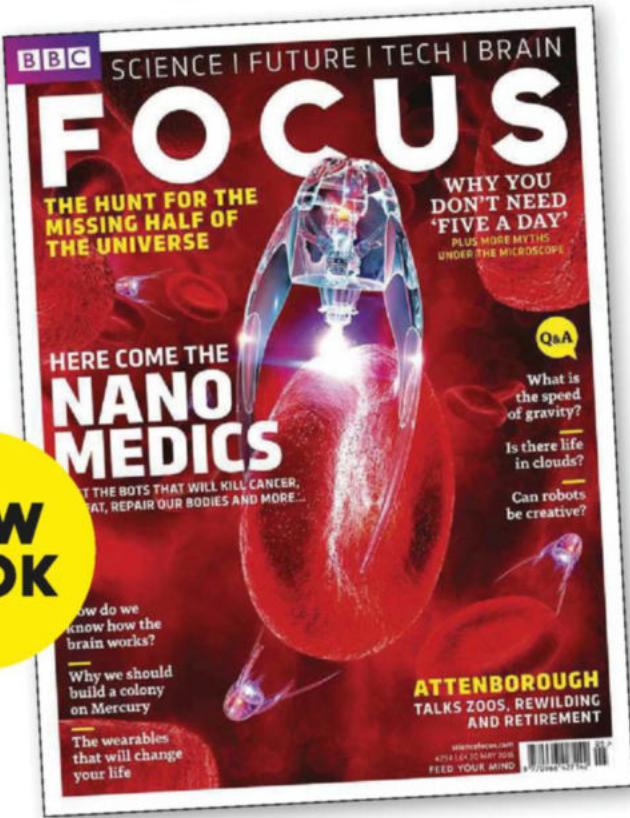
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## HISTORY EXPLORER

# The Roman army in Britain

Nige Tassell and Dr Mark Lewis visit **Caerleon** in south Wales, home to the remains of a Roman garrison, to explore the everyday lives of legionaries

**C**on a grey-ish Wednesday morning in October, the sleepy town of Caerleon, just a handful of miles north of Newport, isn't showing too many signs of life. A small gaggle of kids on their half-term holiday are riding their bikes slowly around the town with little purpose, while an unaccompanied black labrador takes advantage of the absence of traffic to nonchalantly wander across the high street.

It wasn't ever thus. Rewind almost two millennia and Caerleon – or Isca, as it was known at the time – was the epitome of hustle and bustle, a centre of enormous and constant activity. For it was here, right where the town now stands, that a vast Roman garrison was established in c75 AD, home to the mighty Second Augustan Legion. With more than 5,000 men stationed on the 50-acre site, the fortress was the base from which the Romans could control this stretch of what is now south Wales.

### Hoard of finds

As sleepy as it is on this particular day, Caerleon wears its Roman heritage with immense pride – and very visibly. Visitors can visit the excellent National Roman Legion Museum with its fascinating hoard of finds – everything from cremation pots and carpentry tools to lead baggage labels and a coffin made entirely from Bath

stone. Just down the road are the fortress's extensive and state-of-the-art baths, excavated in the 1970s, while the curious can also investigate the original barracks. The jewel in the crown, though, is the amphitheatre just beyond the garrison's walls, the best preserved example in all Britain.

As the senior curator of Roman archaeology at the museum, there is no better guide to the town's past life than Dr Mark Lewis, who is keen to explain why the Romans made such a formidable base in this particular spot. "Its location was key, with huge tactical and strategic importance. It was at the lowest crossing point of the river Usk and also controlled a major north/south route up the Usk Valley. Not only could the entire region be maintained, but it could also be supplied by sea – massively important for such a huge military base as a legionary fortress."

Today, the site is equally important for historians and archaeologists. "There were only around 30 legions in existence in the Roman world at any one time and one of those – the Second Augustan – was permanently based here for more than 200 years. As such, it's not possible to study the Roman army – especially the legionary army – without studying the archaeology of Caerleon."

Those two centuries were relatively



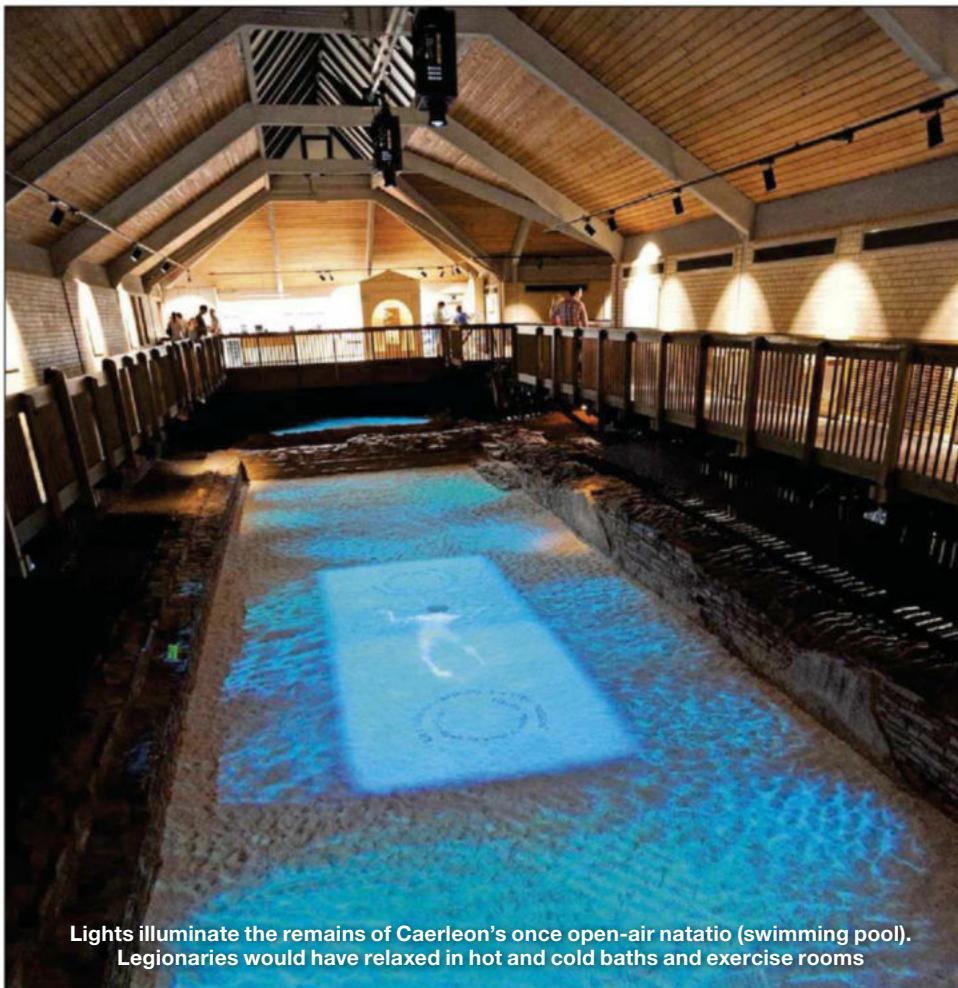
This mosaic from Caerleon's Roman bathhouse probably depicts a lance or staff tip



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CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:  
Caerleon's impressive amphitheatre;  
the exterior of the Roman Legionary  
Museum; the frigidarium (cold room)  
in the Roman bathhouse; a carving of  
a Roman head outside the museum



**Lights illuminate the remains of Caerleon's once open-air natatio (swimming pool). Legionaries would have relaxed in hot and cold baths and exercise rooms**

peaceful, thanks to the secure grasp the Romans established over the occupied locals. "To hold that iron grip, Wales became a militarised zone and Caerleon commanded the southern militarised zone with a network of auxiliary forts. Roman roads were placed between the forts, enabling the soldiers to police the area, marching up and down while keeping an eye on people's movements and what they were up to.

"The native population, the conquered people, had no political rights or status. There would probably have been a mutually imposed separation; they were an occupied people and the Roman army was the occupier. Each would have kept to themselves, like any militarised zone today."

Located just inside the fortress's walls are the remains of four barrack blocks of 12 rooms, each fronted by a veranda. Excavated in the 1920s they remain, beams Lewis, "the only Roman legionary barracks you can see in Europe, and confirm the hierarchy within

the legion". Each 80-soldier century was under the command of a centurion and, while the foot soldiers slept eight to a modest room, the centurion would enjoy a more comfortable living space, quite possibly even with his own private latrine.

### **The wage gap**

The differences were also stark when it came to wages. "A centurion was paid 15-20 times more than a legionary," explains Lewis. "It's not double, it's not treble. It's 15-20 times more!" Not that legionaries didn't have the opportunity to better their lot. They could become immunes, soldiers who had particular skills, such as building or carpentry. They could attain the status of standard-bearer or even become the optio, the centurion's trusted second-in-command. The administratively astute might rise to become a tesserarius, who assisted the centurion and optio with record-keeping and guard duties. "But," continues Lewis, "it

would be a mix of skill, stamina, expertise and longevity if you wanted to get on. And a bribe probably wouldn't hurt."

The duties of the humble legionary though, particularly in peacetime, were many and varied – anything from sentry duty and wood chopping to food preparation and animal husbandry. There would also be daily military training. For instance, it wouldn't be unusual for them to practise crossing the adjacent river Usk in full armour. "The army had to be battle-ready," comments Lewis. "It was once famously said that their training sessions were like battles – and that their battles were just like bloodier training sessions."

But the soldiers of Caerleon needed to relax too. Aside from spending their downtime at the vast bath-house, entertainment was offered at the amphitheatre, usually on special occasions, such as the emperor's birthday or the anniversary of the legion's founding. The arena would have hosted typical Roman fare, usually physical encounters that ended in the death of either gladiator or beast.

The amphitheatre retains an extraordinary presence on the landscape, its stone



**"THE CONQUERED PEOPLE HAD NO POLITICAL RIGHTS OR STATUS. THERE WOULD PROBABLY HAVE BEEN A MUTUALLY IMPOSED SEPARATION"**

**VISIT****Caerleon Roman Fortress and Baths**

walls now topped by grass where a timber-framed structure would have once stood. "We've lost two vaulted entrances," says Lewis, "but how it looks today is pretty much how the stonework was in Roman times." Clearly visible are the pens that held the animals captive before they were released into the arena. One larger chamber is home to two benches where "gladiators probably sat and made one last representation to Nemesis, the goddess of divine fate and retribution, before they left through the doorway to meet their fate in the arena, whatever it might be".

**Arthur's round table**

The amphitheatre was excavated during the 1920s by the husband-and-wife team of Mortimer and Tessa Wheeler, thanks to sponsorship by the *Daily Mail*; the paper was attracted by the hot interest in archaeology created by Howard Carter and his Tutankhamun discoveries. Until then, it resembled what Lewis describes as "a grassy bowl in the landscape, a hollow", which the 12th-century writer Geoffrey of Monmouth had attached to Arthurian legend. Until the 20th century, it had been



Near Newport NP18 1AE  
● [cadw.gov.wales/dayout](http://cadw.gov.wales/dayout)

known as 'Arthur's round table'.

Although Caerleon's Roman riches were only really revealed with the excavations of the last century or so, its ancient history didn't go unacknowledged.

"The memory of Caerleon's past was never lost, because 'Caerleon' means 'fortress of the legion'. A 'caer' in Welsh is the same as a 'chester' or a 'caster' in English – meaning a military camp. It was never forgotten that this was the site of a Roman legion, but by the mid-19th century, the walls were being robbed for building stone and inscriptions were even being broken up to mend roads of Victorian Caerleon. So local philanthropists and academics thought this must stop and raised money to build a little museum to, as they put it, 'save from the destroying hand of time the valuable relics of bygone days'."

As Lewis points out, the subsequent finds excavated from underneath modern Caerleon have been so rich and unparalleled because of the town's comparative diminutiveness. Unlike Chester or York, a large city hasn't been built on top of this once-great fortress. And our guide is eager for much more to be revealed about what lies beneath.

"We don't know everything. Every time we put a spade in the soil or undertake geophysical surveys here in Caerleon, the story actually changes slightly. It's through the archaeological record that we limp forward. There is much that we still don't understand. I estimate that we've probably seen a thousandth of one per cent of the archaeology of this fortress. Most of it is still to be discovered."



Dr Mark Lewis (left) is senior curator of Roman archaeology at the National Roman Legion Museum, Caerleon.  
Words: Nige Tassell

**THE ROMAN ARMY: FIVE MORE PLACES TO EXPLORE****1 Royal Albert Memorial Museum EXETER****Where Roman finds are on show**

There are extensive Roman finds on display here. Exeter is the former legionary base of the Second Augustan Legion and the site of a legionary bathhouse (currently not on display) of a similar design to the legionary fortress baths at Caerleon, which were built later by the same legion. [rammuseum.org.uk](http://rammuseum.org.uk)

**2 Chester Roman Amphitheatre CHESTER****Where a great Roman landmark lies**

The county seat of latter-day Cheshire was the legionary base for the Twentieth Victorious Valeria Legion, as well as being home to another great legionary amphitheatre. Discovered in 1929, the partial excavation reveals the largest Roman amphitheatre in Britain. [english-heritage.org.uk](http://english-heritage.org.uk)

**3 Yorkshire Museum YORK****Where Constantine became emperor**

Known in Roman times as Eboracum, this legionary base, initially founded by the ninth legion and later occupied by the sixth legion, was where Constantine the Great was first proclaimed emperor in AD 306. The Yorkshire Museum hosts an ongoing exhibition, Roman York: Meet the People of the Empire. [yorkshiremuseum.org.uk](http://yorkshiremuseum.org.uk)

**4 Museum of London LONDON****Where a Roman gift can be seen**

The legionary presence in London is quite strong, especially for the Second Augustan Legion that later made its slow passage to Caerleon via the south coast of England. See the famous sculpture of Mithras slaying the bull which was gifted to the Temple of Mithras in Walbrook, London by Ulpius Silvanus of the Second Augustan Legion. [museumoflondon.org.uk](http://museumoflondon.org.uk)

**5 National Museum of Scotland****EDINBURGH****Where the Antonine Wall is recorded**

Among the museum's Roman holdings is the Bridgeness distance slab which records the portion of the Antonine Wall constructed by the Second Augustan Legion. The wall, stretching between the Firths of Clyde and Forth, was home to 17 forts and controlled and patrolled by up to 7,000 legionaries. [nms.ac.uk](http://nms.ac.uk)

## MY FAVOURITE PLACE

# Bethlehem, West Bank

**by Jacob Norris**

For the Christmas instalment of our historical holidays series, Jacob visits the holy, yet cosmopolitan, city of Bethlehem

**B**ethlehem often seems to exist more in the imagination than in reality. I first visited in 1999 as part of a whistle-stop tour of Israel. Like most visitors, we were bussed to the Church of the Nativity for a 30-minute guided tour. An hour later we were back at the hotel in nearby Jerusalem without having set foot on the streets of Bethlehem beyond the church.

As the coach left Bethlehem that day, through an urban sprawl covering the rugged hills of the central West Bank, I wondered what lay beyond the guided tour. Who were the people that lived there? What was the reality behind the iconic image on our Christmas cards?

Gradually I came back to visit in ever longer stays. The more time I spent, the more I was fascinated by Bethlehem's multi-layered history and vibrant modern society. Today I'm writing a book about the city and co-ordinating a team of people working on a digital museum that will bring its unique urban culture to new public audiences.

Through this work I've come to know a city that is quintessentially Palestinian yet curiously cosmopolitan. It was never explained to me in that first trip that we had

left Israel upon entering Bethlehem. But the town is decidedly beyond the 'green line' that separates Israel proper from the Palestinian territories it has occupied since 1967. The sounds and smells of Bethlehem are unmistakeably Arabic. Spice markets and vegetable hawkers line narrow alleyways, and the call to prayer rings out from pencil-thin minarets.

But this Arabic personality also includes a large Christian population who strongly identify as Palestinian Arab and historically form the majority of Bethlehem's inhabitants. The ringing of church bells and the passing of processions honouring local saints are equally common sounds and sights. The deep-seated integration of Christian and Muslim life in Bethlehem is a reminder that sectarianism has not always defined the Middle East. Many

of the saints those processions revere are also sacred to local Islamic tradition and you'll routinely find Muslims praying at the town's nominally Christian shrines.

And there is certainly no shortage of shrines. First among them is the Church of the Nativity, standing over the cave widely held to be the birthplace of Christ. Built in the early 4th century AD as part of Roman emperor Constantine's embrace of Christianity, it was rebuilt in AD 565, making it one of the oldest functioning churches in the world.

To avoid crowds of day-trippers, visit the church in the early morning when you can really contemplate its sanctity. While staying in the adjoining Franciscan hostel, the Casa Nova, I would venture down to the crypt at 7am to listen to Armenian monks performing their prayers in a series of hypnotic chants. Even as a non-Christian, I was moved by this ancient ritual.

Venturing beyond the church, you come across a beguiling



**Bethlehem's Church of the Nativity, one of the world's oldest, attracts visitors of all faiths and none, from all over the world**

array of other shrines. Some, like Shepherd's Fields or Rachel's Tomb, are major sites within Christian, Jewish and Islamic scripture. Others are more quirky and unique to Bethlehem. At the Milk Grotto Chapel – a cave Mary is held to have turned white after spilling a drop of breastmilk when feeding baby Jesus – local women make fertility prayers. At the tiny Orthodox Church of al-Khadir just outside the city, Muslims and Christians still make sacrifices to Saint George who is believed to have lived in the area – a decidedly Palestinian saint in these parts.



**The Milk Grotto Chapel is visited by pilgrims and locals alike, some of whom make fertility prayers to the Virgin Mary**



## ADVICE FOR TRAVELLERS

### BEST TIME TO GO

Bethlehem has a Mediterranean climate with warm summers and mild winters. Springtime sees the surrounding hills at their most beautiful, covered in wild flowers after the winter rains. Christmas is an experience to remember, although pricier and very crowded.

### GETTING THERE

While there is no Palestinian airport, international passport holders can move freely in and out of the West Bank via Israel or Jordan. Direct flights to either take around five hours, with the bus to Bethlehem then taking 2–3 hours. When coming from Jordan, expect long queues at the Israeli-controlled Allenby Bridge crossing into the West Bank, but less so if entering directly from Israel.

### WHAT TO PACK

Clothing will depend on the season, but long sleeves and full-length trousers/dresses are required for visiting religious shrines.

### WHAT TO BRING BACK

Bethlehem is awash with religious souvenirs, some of which come from the city's renowned artisan workshops. The city is also famous for its colourful, embroidered dresses, scarves and jackets.

### READERS' VIEWS

**A historian's treasure trove**  
*Peter O'Reilly*

**Beautiful city, with lovely people**  
*Susan Derderian*

“The deep-seated integration of Christian and Muslim life in the city is a reminder that sectarianism has not always defined the Middle East

To me, the interesting thing about these sites is not the shrines themselves, but the people who use them. Bethlehemites are a fascinating mixture of devout traditionalism and modern innovation. In the 19th century, they travelled to all corners of the world selling distinctive 'Holy Land' devotional objects that are still

carved and sold in the town today. Their migrations produced a large Bethlehem diaspora still present today, especially in South America.

This has made Bethlehem a strikingly cosmopolitan society. The city's architecture has been shaped by these global connections. Beautiful mansions built in the early 20th century dot the city's urban landscape, combining European and Islamic styles in their elaborate facades.

You need to spend proper time in Bethlehem to appreciate its magic. It's a surprisingly easy place to visit and a great starting

point for finding out about life in the Palestinian territories. In a way, Bethlehem belongs to all of us, and the locals – always welcoming, warm and open – really make you feel that. ■

**Jacob Norris** is a lecturer in Middle Eastern history at the University of Sussex and is currently writing a book about Bethlehem

Read more of Jacob's experiences at [historyextra.com/Bethlehem](http://historyextra.com/Bethlehem)

**Next month:** Daniel Szechi visits New Orleans, Louisiana



### Been there...

Have you been to **Bethlehem**? Do you have a top tip for readers? Contact us via Twitter or Facebook

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# Christmas GIFT GUIDE

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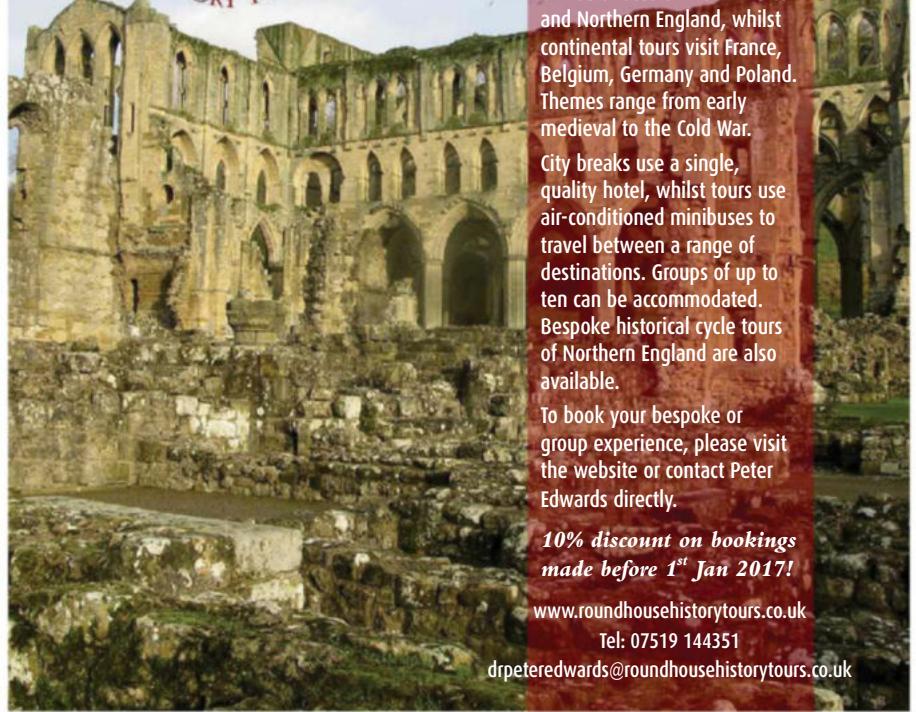
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### DID YOU KNOW...?

**Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer** was created as a marketing gimmick for an American department store. In 1939 a manager at Montgomery Ward, a famous name in US retailing, decided to produce a children's book for a Christmas promotion. Copywriter Robert L May considered making his hero a moose before settling on a reindeer, choosing the name Rudolph from a shortlist that included Romeo, Rollo and Reginald. May's brother-in-law Johnny Marks later set the verse to music – and when Gene Autry's recording of the song became a hit at Christmas 1949, the red-nosed reindeer found worldwide fame.

*Nick Rennison*



**The first commercially produced Christmas card** (pictured above) caused controversy when it went on sale in 1843 because it depicted a child drinking wine. Sir Henry Cole, a civil servant who had been involved in the creation of the penny post a few years earlier, came up with the idea of Christmas greetings cards and commissioned artist John Callcott Horsley to design the first. Horsley's image of a three-generation family cheerfully toasting the card's recipient includes a mother raising a large glass of wine to the lips of her small daughter. Temperance organisations were outraged – but their complaints did little to dent sales of Cole's cards, which established the perennially popular tradition.

*Nick Rennison*

### GOT A QUESTION?

Write to *BBC History Magazine*, Tower House, Fairfax Street, Bristol BS1 3BN. Email: [historymagazine@historyextra.com](mailto:historymagazine@historyextra.com) or submit via our website: [historyextra.com/bbchistorymagazine](http://historyextra.com/bbchistorymagazine)

**Q** How did armies raze walls or cities in the time before black powder (gunpowder)? Did they just use battering rams?

**Stephan Györy**, Zurich

**A** 'Raze' (from the Latin verb 'ras-', meaning 'scraped') implies a process that leaves nothing standing. The amount of effort involved in such an undertaking suggests it might never have happened anywhere in the literal sense. Your actual, everyday razing was only slightly less drastic: looting, burning, demolishing defences and removing, killing or enslaving the population.

History and mythology are littered with razings but, though chroniclers blithely report them occurring, the few eyewitness accounts that survive are probably exaggerated anyway. A conquered city and its population were valuable assets, so the only reason you'd destroy everything would be to prevent future opposition from its inhabitants or to terrify any potential resistance from others. The Assyrians and Mongols, for instance, heralded the horrible things that befell anyone who opposed them.

Hints of the razing procedure can be found here and there. The first-century historian Josephus, for instance, tells us that when Titus took Jerusalem in AD 70, his troops destroyed buildings and left no trees standing. However, some towers and walls were spared to show future generations the formidable defences overcome by the mighty Roman military machine. We don't know if the demolition was carried out

by Roman troops or if they got enslaved survivors to do some

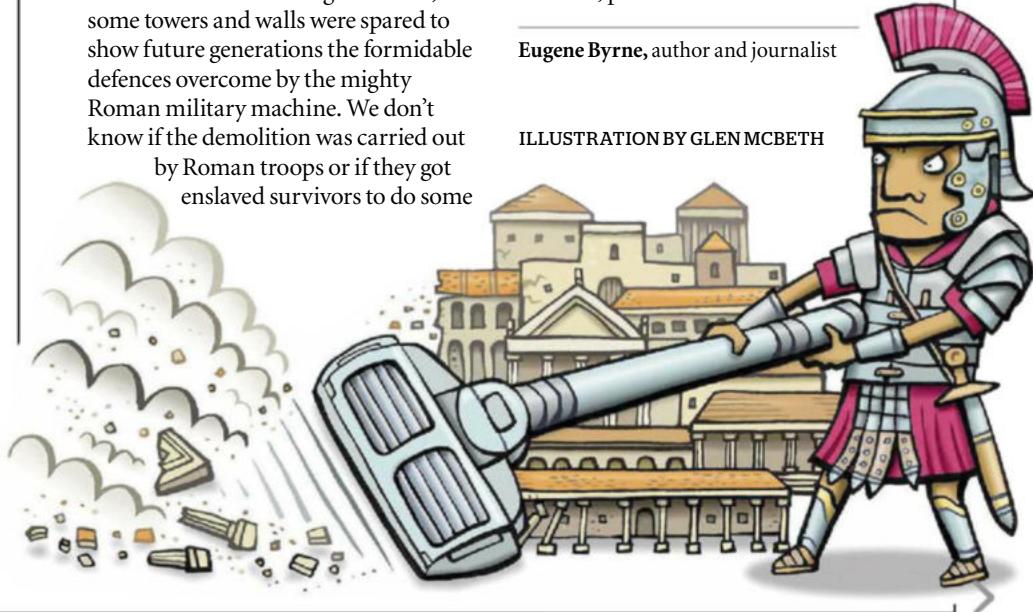
of the hard work. It would be reasonable to suppose that a systematic approach would not involve battering rams but, rather, dismantling the structures piece by piece, top downwards.

Though we know little of the technical procedures used to raze a city, we know some of the symbolic ones. Myth has it that, after conquering the city of Carthage in 146 BC, the Roman consul Scipio Aemilianus sowed the soil with salt. No ancient sources support this claim, though ancient Hittite and Assyrian chronicles talk of salt being symbolically strewn over conquered towns, and of the deliberate sowing of weeds. Other traditions included drawing a plough across the land to show that what was once an urban area would henceforth be rural.

Even later, black powder was not used for demolition as often as you might think – it would be a messy, expensive and hazardous process. When Oliver Cromwell ordered the 'slighting' of castles and defences, they were often simply taken apart by enterprising locals, who re-used the stone and timber as building materials. The process was, in effect, privatised!

**Eugene Byrne**, author and journalist

ILLUSTRATION BY GLEN MCBETH



## SAMANTHA'S RECIPE CORNER



Every issue, picture editor **Samantha Nott** brings you a recipe from the past. This month it's a rich Scottish fruit cake still enjoyed at Hogmanay

### Black bun

Scottish new year celebrations are renowned, and this pastry-wrapped fruit cake has been part of Hogmanay festivities since at least the 18th century. Traditionally, it would have been carried over the threshold by a dark-haired man at midnight to ensure good luck for the house, a custom known as 'first-footing'. Whether it's delivered by a tall, dark stranger or simply enjoyed with a cup of tea or whisky, the black bun still makes a tasty treat.

#### INGREDIENTS

**350g shortcrust pastry**  
**Filling:**  
**225g plain flour**  
**1 tsp bicarbonate of soda**  
**1 tsp mixed spice**  
**1 tsp ground ginger**  
**1 tsp ground cinnamon**  
**1 tsp ground mace**  
**1 tsp baking powder**  
**115g raisins**  
**350g sultanas**  
**350g currants**  
**115g mixed peel**  
**115g pale muscovado sugar**  
**115g chopped almonds**  
**5 tbsp milk**  
**1 egg**  
**1 tbsp whisky**

#### METHOD

Pre-heat oven to 180°C (gas mark 4). Roll out two-thirds of the pastry and line a greased tin with it (I used a large loaf tin). Wrap the remaining pastry in cling film and refrigerate.

Sift the flour, bicarbonate of soda, spices and baking powder into a bowl and add the fruit, sugar and chopped nuts. Give it a good stir. Pour in the milk, the lightly beaten egg and whisky, stir until well mixed and spoon into the pastry-lined tin.

Cover the pie with the remaining pastry, rolled. Wet the edges of the pastry with water and pinch the edges closed. Glaze with beaten egg, make a few holes in the top with a skewer and bake for 2½-3 hours, covered with greaseproof paper to prevent it burning.

#### VERDICT

"A beautifully rich fruitcake that will keep for ages"

#### Difficulty: 5/10

Time: 4.5 hours

Recipe from *Cakes Regional and Traditional* by Julie Duff (Grub Street, 2003)



Dark and delicious: Scottish black bun, a new year treat



An Edwardian couple relax in an enclosed garden in this c1905 photograph

### Q When did gardening become a popular pastime for aesthetic rather than practical reasons?

**Paul Bloomfield, Bath**

**A** A kitchen garden or a vegetable plot of some kind was usual in larger dwellings from the medieval period, and there would often be an ornamental aspect to these – a bower surrounded by roses and other shrubs, perhaps, or a turf lawn. By the mid-16th century it was not uncommon for larger townhouses (of merchants or lawyers) to boast an ornamental garden – a 'parterre' of grass plats, hedges and gravel.

Domestic gardening as we know it developed from the Regency period onwards. The landscape designer Humphry Repton and others recommended enclosed areas near the house, with amorphous flowerbeds and railings, which gave on to the wider parkland. For those who did not boast parkland it was possible to imagine merely the enclosed garden element.

This idea was developed in the early to mid-19th century by authors and journalists writing for the emergent 'middling sort' – chiefly John Claudius Loudon who came up with scores of templates for gardens with lawns, shrubberies, flowerbeds and productive

areas, in a style that became known as 'gardenesque'. Even those in small terraced houses began to experiment with ornamental features in their tiny yards – a 'pretension' that was satirised in periodicals such as *Punch*.

The next big development came in the Victorian and Edwardian periods with the Arts and Crafts movement, which placed an emphasis on herbaceous borders and creating a feeling of 'Olde England' by means of ornamental stonework.

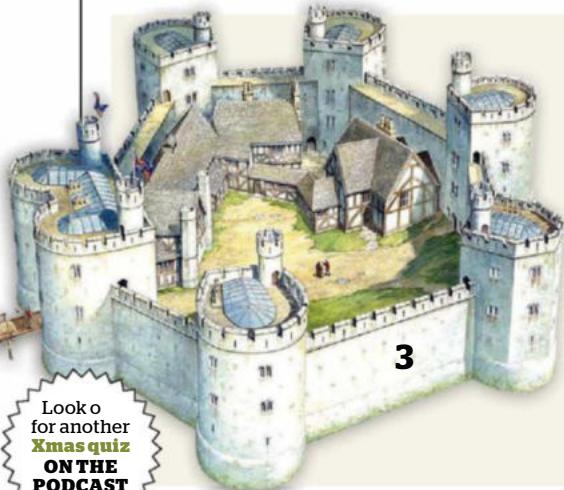
However, this was still largely the preserve of the upper middle classes. True democratisation in gardening developed in the interwar period with the advent of the housebuilding boom of the 1920s and 30s, when thousands of new houses were endowed with gardens that were essentially miniaturised versions of the Arts and Crafts prescription. Housebuilders sometimes provided the garden features themselves, or worked with local nurseries.

**Tim Richardson**, garden historian and author of Oxford University's online course on English landscape history



# CHRISTMAS QUIZ

COMPILED BY JULIAN HUMPHRYS

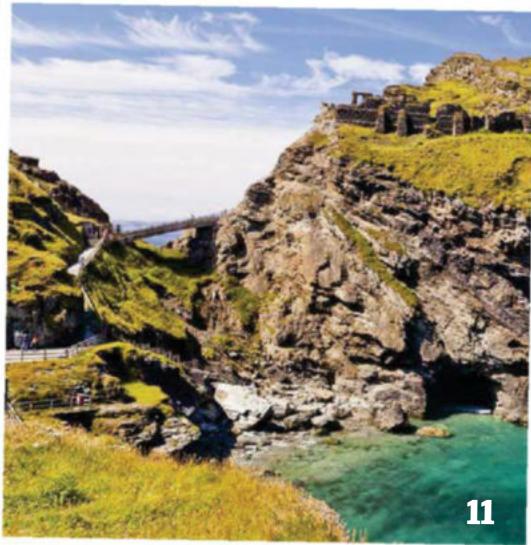


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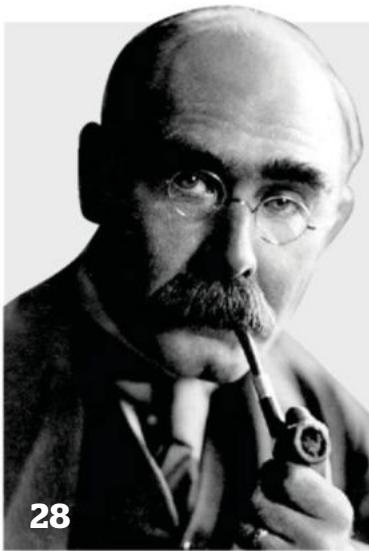
Look o  
for another  
**Xmas quiz**  
**ON THE**  
**PODCAST**

## IT HAPPENED IN 2016

11. What caused controversy at Tintagel in February?
12. Which distinguished Yorkshire-born historian and Bletchley Park veteran died in March?
13. Which iconic portrait was acquired for the nation in July?
14. What was destroyed by fire on 4 September, watched by thousands of people?
15. Which Elizabethan poet and playwright was credited in October as being the co-writer of Shakespeare's *Henry VI* trilogy?



11



28

## WHAT WERE THE CHRISTMAS CONTRIBUTIONS MADE BY...?

21. Tom Smith (in 1847)
22. John de Watteville (1747)
23. Queen Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz (1800)
24. John Leech (1843)
25. Thomas Nast (c1863)
26. Henry Livingston Jr or Clement Clarke Moore (c1823)
27. The John Scott Trotter Orchestra and the Ken Darby Singers and Chorus (1942)
28. Rudyard Kipling (1932)
29. The people of Oslo (1947)
30. Franz Xaver Gruber and Joseph Mohr (1818)

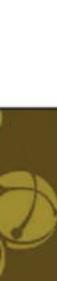
5. 450th: Who was found dead at Kirk o'Field, Edinburgh on 10 February 1567?
6. 300th: Which theatrical great was born in Hereford on 19 February 1717?
7. 200th: Whose death on 6 November 1817 plunged Britain into mourning?
8. 150th: Which Nobel Prize-winning physicist and chemist was born in Warsaw on 7 November 1867?
9. 100th: Into where did General Edmund Allenby walk on 11 December 1917?
10. 50th: Which environmental disaster began on 18 March 1967?

## IT HAPPENED AT CHRISTMAS

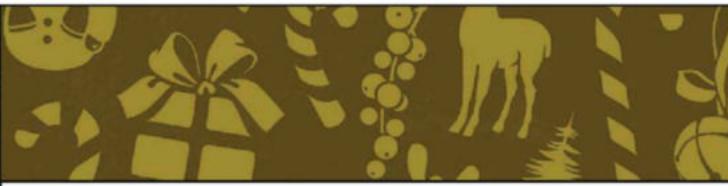
16. Peter Paul Rubens' *Adoration of the Magi* (pictured below) oversees which Christmas event?
17. Which British crown colony surrendered to the Japanese on Christmas day 1941?
18. Which English king was crowned on Christmas Day?
19. The first was delivered by John Millington in 1825. What was it?
20. What was removed from Westminster Abbey on Christmas Day 1950?



16



31



## GIFTS IN HISTORY

31. Who was given this building in 1528, and by whom?
32. This painting by Titian was one of several presented to Charles II on his restoration to the throne. Who gave them?
33. Who headed the public fund to send these gift tins to members of the British armed forces in the First World War?
34. These tins were given to British soldiers during the Boer War. What did they contain?
35. Where is this and to whom did the nation give it?
36. Where is this and who gave it to the nation?
37. To whom did Louis IX of France give this elephant in 1255?
38. Who created this jewelled egg, one of a series given by tsars Alexander III and Nicholas II to their wives and mothers?

32



33



36

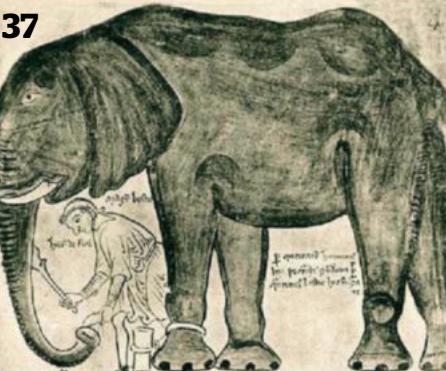
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34



37



38

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## SOLUTION TO OUR NOVEMBER CROSSWORD

**Across:** 7 Christian I 8 Cody 9/25 Empress Dowager 10 Taoism 11 Speer 12 Runciman 14 Suicide 16 Sherman 19 Cyclades 21 Rialto 23 Plague 26 Kohl 27 New Orleans. **Down:** 1 Shrewsbury 2 Dieppe 3 Æthelred 4 Hansard 5 Fifton 6 Ides 8 Crosier 13 Alan Turing 15 Caligula 17 Hereward 18 Ashdown 20 Duenna 22 Angles 24 Loos.

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## QUIZ ANSWERS

### 2017 ANNIVERSARIES:

1. Lincoln.
2. The Treaty of Montgomery.
3. King Henry IV.
4. Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses to the door of Wittenberg Castle church.
5. Henry Stuart, Lord Darnley (and his valet).
6. David Garrick.
7. Princess Charlotte of Wales, only child of the future George IV.
8. Marie Curie.
9. Jerusalem.
10. The oil tanker *Torrey Canyon* struck rocks off the Cornish coast and began to break up.

### IT HAPPENED IN 2016:

11. English Heritage unveiled a carving of Merlin on the rock beneath the castle.
12. Asa Briggs.
13. The Armada portrait of Elizabeth I.
14. A 120-metre-long model of 17th-century London, to mark the 350th anniversary of the Great Fire.
15. Christopher Marlowe.

### IT HAPPENED AT CHRISTMAS:

16. The Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols at King's College, Cambridge.
17. Hong Kong.
18. William the Conqueror.
19. The Royal Institution Christmas Lecture.
20. The Stone of Scone.

### CHRISTMAS CONTRIBUTIONS:

21. He created the first Christmas crackers.
22. He started the tradition of Christingle, in Marienborn, Germany.
23. She set up England's first known Christmas tree.
24. He illustrated the first edition of Charles Dickens' novella *A Christmas Carol*.
25. A German-born American illustrator, he is credited with creating the modern image of Santa Claus.
26. Both are reputed authors of the poem *A Visit from St Nicholas*, also known as *The Night Before Christmas*.
27. They backed Bing Crosby on his bestselling recording of 'White Christmas'.

28. He wrote the first royal Christmas broadcast, which was delivered by George V.
29. They first gave London a Christmas tree to erect in Trafalgar Square – a gesture of appreciation for Britain's support during the Second World War.
30. They wrote the Christmas carol 'Silent Night'.

### GIFTS IN HISTORY:

31. Hampton Court was given to Henry VIII by Thomas Wolsey.
32. The States General of the Netherlands.
33. Princess Mary, daughter of George V.
34. Chocolate.
35. Stratfield Saye House, Hampshire, given to the Duke of Wellington.
36. Chequers, Buckinghamshire, given by Arthur and Ruth Lee.
37. King Henry III.
38. Peter Carl Fabergé.

**Across**

**6** The first aviator to cross the English Channel (7)

**8/10 across/37 down** Gloucestershire market town, site in spring 1646 of a decisive battle of the Civil War (4-2-3-4)

**12** William the Conqueror's grave is located in this city in Normandy (4)

**13** Modern name of the old Roman port Dubris (5)

**15** See 39 across.

**16** 16th- and 17th-century religious reformists who aimed to remove the vestiges of Roman Catholicism remaining after the Elizabethan settlement (8)

**18** An 18th-century British statesman who supported the French Revolution, American independence and the abolition of slavery (7,3)

**19** See 31 down.

**20** Biblical land of southern Arabia, famously associated with a queen and her flamboyant visit to Jerusalem (5)

**23** Sport that has its origins in the game of *jeu de paume* of 12th- and 13th-century France (6)

**24** English peasant poet who, after a brief period of fame, fell out of fashion and was committed to an asylum until his death in 1864 (5)

**25** A large peninsular region that was mainly under Ottoman control until a revolt, assisted by the British and French governments, during the First World War (6)

**27** In feudal times, a vassal's duty to his lord (6)

**29** Name of several Egyptian kings of the 15th and 14th centuries BC (9)

**32** Traditional tin-mining areas of Cornwall and Devon (10)

**34** The last to die of the 'big three' 18th-century English furniture-makers (8)

**35** Fictional island, portrayed in two of Plato's dialogues as an antagonistic power defeated by the Athenians (8)

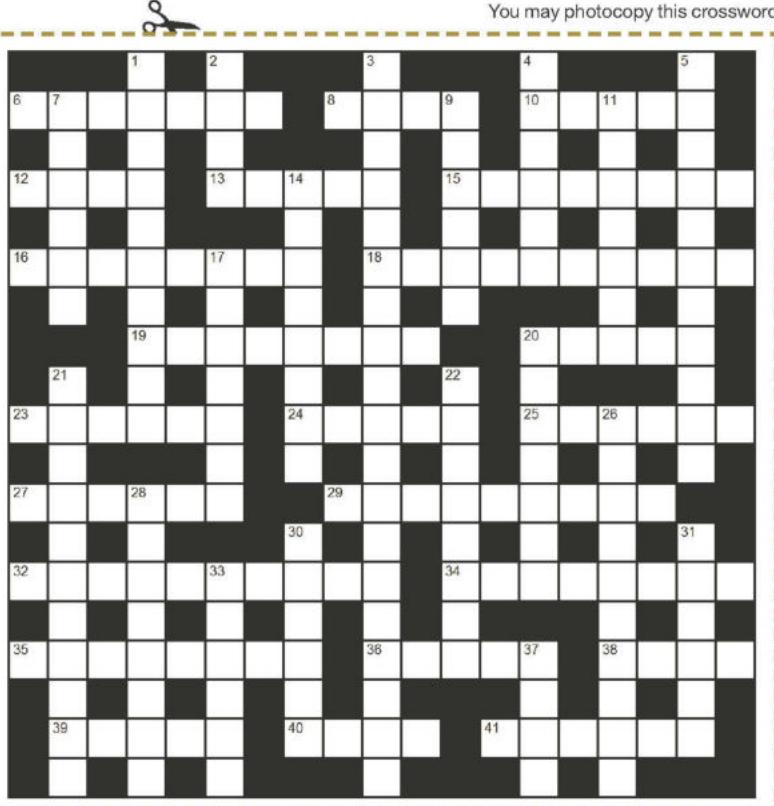
**36** US vice president who resigned under duress in 1973 (5)

**38** A stock character of the comparatively modern form of a musical comedy tradition (4)

**39/15 for example, Hardknott or Segedunum (5,8)**

**40** The stepson of Claudius, who succeeded him as emperor (4)

**41** The value of this coin was one-tenth of a pound sterling (6)



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**26** Russian emperor who helped form the coalition responsible for Napoleon's downfall (9,1)

**28** Established in the First World War, the Women's \_\_\_\_\_ took on the work of conscripted male farm workers (4,4)

**30** Commanding officer of the 'Dambusters' raid during the Second World War (6)

**31/19 across** Major turning point in English history, stemming from events that unfolded a decade earlier during the reign of Edward the Confessor (6,8)

**33** Member of Rome's Second Triumvirate who controlled the eastern provinces (6)

**37** See 8 across.

Compiled by **Eddie James**

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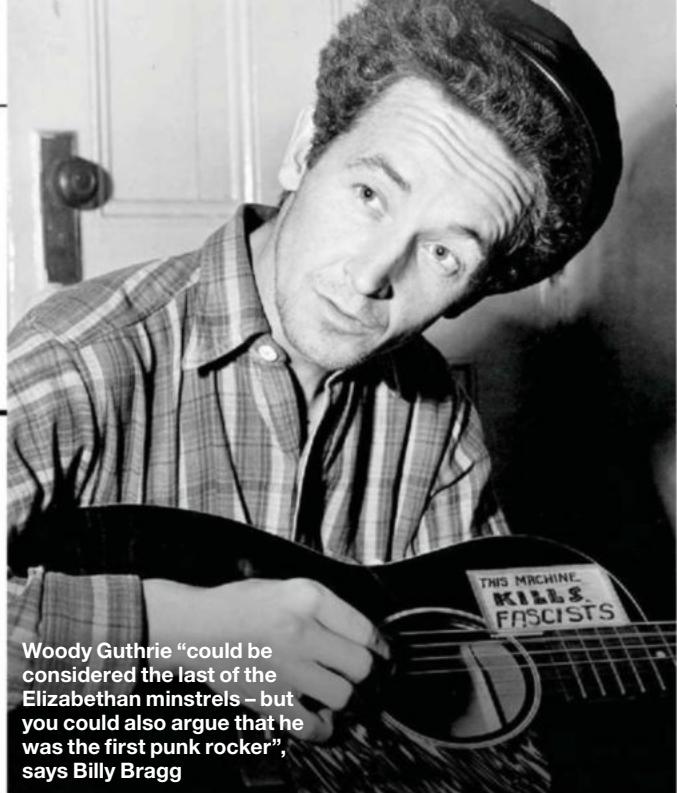


**"The fate of the poor in the Great Depression made a deep impression on him, and it was society's lack of fairness that drove much of what he did in his career, inspiring many of his finest songs"**

*Singer-songwriter Billy Bragg chooses*

# Woody Guthrie

**1912-67**



**Woody Guthrie** "could be considered the last of the Elizabethan minstrels – but you could also argue that he was the first punk rocker", says **Billy Bragg**

**B**orn in Okemah, Oklahoma, Woody Guthrie became a radical American singer-songwriter. Best known for writing 'This Land is Your Land', his songs about migrant workers of the Great Depression earned him the nickname 'Dust Bowl Troubadour'. Associated with leftwing causes throughout his life, in the 1960s he inspired a new generation of folk singers, most notably Bob Dylan. Married three times, he fathered eight children before dying at the age of 55 from complications arising from Huntington's disease, an inherited neurological disorder.

### **When did you first hear about Woody Guthrie?**

In my teens, before punk, I was obsessed with Bob Dylan, and got into singer-songwriters who were like him, including Woody. At the time, though, it was virtually impossible to get his records where I grew up in Barking, Essex. So I ended up learning his songs through osmosis – that is, by listening to other singers like Ry Cooder, who'd covered songs of his such as 'Vigilante Man', which really made me sit up and listen.

### **What kind of person was he?**

He was a difficult man, in some respects. He was hard to live with, and he didn't have great relationships with his wives. He could also be a bit of a toerag. At the same time, he was a hugely influential artiste and songwriter, and had a real ear for the language used by the common man – migrants much like his family, from Oklahoma and other plains states, who were forced to migrate to California during the Great Depression of the 1930s. Their fate made a deep impression on him, and it was society's lack of fairness that drove much of what he did in his career, inspiring many of his finest songs.

### **What made him a hero?**

His willingness to stick to his beliefs and not become co-opted by the mainstream. Also, the fact that he's the father of my tradition: the protest singer-songwriter. He was on the cusp of a time – the dawn of 'popular music' – when a lot of old American folk music was dying out. He could be considered the last of the Elizabethan minstrels, because he learned songs from his grandmother, songs

such as 'Gypsy Davy', variations of which first appeared on song sheets in Jacobean England. Having said that, you could also argue that he was the first punk rocker – he really didn't care about material goods, and lived life the way he wanted to.

### **What was Woody Guthrie's finest hour?**

It would have to be his song 'This Land is Your Land'. He wrote it in response to Irvin Berlin's 'God Bless America', which topped the US charts in 1940. 'This Land' – a song that belonged to everyone, about a land that was "made for you and me" – is undoubtedly the one for which he's best remembered. One of the things that gives the song such power is that it talks about the greatness of America, but also its problems – and to do that in a song that's become so widely loved, an alternative national anthem, is quite something.

### **Is there anything you don't particularly admire about him?**

I don't admire the way he treated his wives. I don't understand how that fitted in with the principles he held.

### **Can you see any parallels between Guthrie's life and your own?**

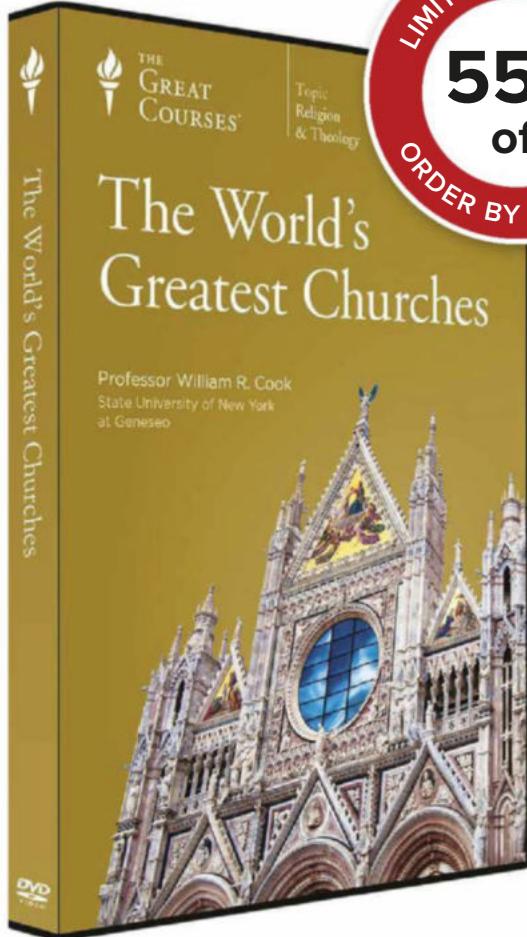
We're both communicators, and use any medium we can to get our ideas out there. Mind you, when people ask me to go along and do something "in the spirit of Woody Guthrie", I draw the line at some of the things he did – like the time he peeled off the balcony [of a Fifth Avenue apartment in New York City] on to the people below!

### **If you met Guthrie today, what would you ask him?**

I'd love to know what he made of today's America – and with a president-elect like Donald Trump, you can't help wishing that Woody was around today. Funnily enough, he actually wrote a song about Trump's father, Fred – a landlord who Guthrie felt had treated some of his tenants pretty badly – called 'Old Man Trump'. Woody was obviously ahead of his time! ■

*Billy Bragg was talking to York Membery*

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